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THE
ENGLISH COMIC WRITERS
& MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS

BY WILLIAM HAZLITT

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MOST
CURRENT
FOR THAT
THEY COME
HOME TO
MEN'S
BUSINESS
& BOSOMS

LORD BACON

LECTURES
on the
ENGLISH
COMIC
WRITERS
with Miscellaneous
ESSAYS *by*
WILLIAM
HAZLITT

LONDON & TORONTO
J·M·DENT & SONS, LTD
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INTRODUCTION[1]

BY W. E. HENLEY

WHEN Stevenson was pleased to declare that "we are mighty fine fellows, but we cannot write like William Hazlitt," he said no more than the truth. Whether or not we are mighty fine fellows is a great Perhaps; but that none of us, from Stevenson down, can as writers come near to Hazlitt—this, to me, is merely indubitable. To note that he now and then writes blank verse is to note that he sometimes writes impassioned prose;[2] he misquoted habitually; he was a good hater, and could be monstrous unfair; he was given to thinking twice, and his second thoughts were not always better than his first; he repeated himself as seemed good to him. But in the criticism of politics, the criticism of letters, the criticism of acting, the criticism and expression of life,[3] there is none like him. His politics are not mine; I think he is ridiculously mistaken when he contrasts the Wordsworth of the best things in *The Excursion* with the " classic Akenside "; his *Byron* is the merest petulance; his *Burke* (when he is in a bad temper with Burke), his *Fox*, his *Pitt*, his *Bonaparte*—these are impossible. Also, I never talk art or life with him but I disagree. But I go on reading him, all the same; and I find that technically and spiritually I am always the better for the bout. Where outside Boswell is there better talk than in Hazlitt's *Boswell Redivivus*—his so-called *Conversations with Northcote?* And his *Age of Elizabeth*, and his *Comic Writers*, and his *Spirit of the Age*—where else to look for such a feeling for differences, such a sense of literature, such an instant, such a masterful, whole-hearted interest in the marking and distinguishing qualities of writers? And *The Plain Speaker*—is it not at least as good reading as (say) *Virginibus Puerisque* and the discoursings of the late imperishable Mr. Pater? His *Political Essays* is readable after—how many years? His notes on Kean and the Siddons are as novel and convincing as when they were penned. In truth, he is ever a solace and a refreshment. As a critic of letters he lacks the intense, immortalising vision, even as he lacks, in places, the illuminating and inevitable style of Lamb. But if he be less savoury, he is also more solid, and he gives you phrases, conclusions, splendours of insight and expression, high-piled and golden essays in appreciation: as the *Wordsworth* and the *Coleridge* of the *Political Essays*, the character of Hamlet, the note on Shakespeare's style, the *Horne Tooke*, the *Cervantes*, the *Rousseau*, the *Sir Thomas Browne*, the *Cobbet*: that must ever be rated high among the possessions of the English mind.

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[1] From the Introduction to "The Collected Works of William Hazlitt."—J. M. Dent & Co., 1902-1906.

[2] It filled the valley like a mist,
And still poured out its endless chant,
And still it swells upon the ear,
And wraps me in a golden trance,
Drowning the noisy tumult of the world.

. . . . .

Like sweetest warblings from a sacred grove . . .
Contending with the wild winds as they roar . . .
And the proud places of the insolent
And the oppressor fell . . .
Such and so little is the mind of man!

[3] His summary of the fight between Hickman and Bill Neate is alone in literature, as also in the annals of the Ring. Jon Bee was an intelligent creature of his kind, and knew a very great deal more about pugilism than Hazlitt knew; but to contrast the two is to learn much. Badcock (which is Jon Bee) had seen (and worshipped) Jem Belcher, and had reported fights with an extreme contempt for Pierce Egan, the illiterate ass who gave us *Boxiana*. Hazlitt, however, looked on at the proceedings of Neate and the Gaslight Man exactly as he had looked on at divers creations of Edmund Kean. He saw the essentials in both expressions of human activity, and his treatment of both is fundamentally the same. In both he ignores the trivial: here the acting (in its lowest sense), there the hits that did not count. And thus, as he gives you only the vital

As a writer, therefore, it is with Lamb that I would bracket him: they are dissimilars, but they go gallantly and naturally

---

touches, you know how and why Neate beat Hickman, and can tell the exact moment at which Hickman began to be a beaten man. 'Tis the same with his panegyric on Cavanagh, the fives-player. For a blend of gusto with understanding I know but one thing to equal with this: the note on Dr. Grace, which appeared in *The National Observer*; and the night that that was written, I sent the writer back to Hazlitt's *Cavanagh*, and said to him —— On the whole, the *Dr. Grace* is the better of the two. But it has scarce the incorruptible fatness of the *Cavanagh*. Gusto, though, is Hazlitt's special attribute: he glories in what he likes, what he reads, what he feels, what he writes. He triumphed in his Kean, his Shakespeare, his Bill Neate, his Rousseau, his coffee-and-cream, and *Love for Love* in the inn-parlour at Alton. He relished things; and expressed them with a relish. That is his " note." Some others have relished only the consummate expression of nothing.

together—*par nobile fratrum.*[1] Give us these two, with some ripe Cobbett, a volume of Southey, some Wordsworth, certain pages of Shelley, a great deal of the Byron who wrote letters, and we get the right prose of the time. The best of it all, perhaps, is the best of Lamb. But Hazlitt's, for different qualities, is so imminent and shining a second that I hesitate as to the pre-eminency. Probably the race is Lamb's. But Hazlitt is ever Hazlitt; and at his highest moments Hazlitt is hard to beat, and has not these many years been beaten.

The following is a list of Hazlitt's published works:—

"Essay on the Principles of Human Action . . . with Remarks on the System of Hartley and Helvetius," 1805; "Free Thoughts on Public Affairs," 1806; "Abridgment of Abraham Tucker's 'Light of Nature,'" 1807; "Eloquence of the British Senate" (Parliamentary Speeches and Notes), 1807; "Reply to Malthus," 1807; "A New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue," etc., 1810; "Memoir of Thomas Holcroft," written by himself, etc., continued by Hazlitt, 1816; "The Round Table," from *The Examiner*, 1817; "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays," 1817, 1818; "A Review of the English Stage; or, a Series of Dramatic Criticisms," 1818, 1821; "Lectures on the English Poets," 1818, 1819; "Lectures on the English Comic Writers," 1819; "Letter to William Gifford," 1819; "Political Essays, with Sketches of Public Characters," 1819, 1822; "Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth," 1820; "Table Talk; or, Original Essays on Men and Manners," 1821-2, 1824; "Liber Amoris; or, The New Pygmalion," 1823; "Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries in England," with a criticism on "Marriage à la Mode" (in part from *London Magazine*), 1824; "Characteristics, in the manner of Rochefoucauld's Maxims," 1823, 1837; "The Spirit of the Age; or, Contemporary Portraits," 1825; "The Plain Speaker; or, Opinions on Books, Men, and Things," 1826; "Notes of a Journey through France and Italy" (from *Morning Chronicle*), 1826; "Boswell Redivivus," 1827; "The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte," vols. i. and ii., 1828; iii. and iv., 1830; "Conversations of James Northcote, Esq., R.A.," 1830.

POSTHUMOUS PUBLICATIONS: "Criticisms on Art, etc., 1843, 1844; "Literary Remains," etc., 1836; "Winterslow: Essays and Characters written there," 1850; "Sketches and Essays," now first collected, 1839; republished as "Men and Manners," 1852.

COLLECTED WORKS: Edited Waller and Glover, 13 vols., 1902-6.

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[1] Listen, else, to Lamb himself: "Protesting against much that he has written, and some things which he chooses to do; judging him by his conversation which I enjoyed so long, and relished so deeply; or by his books, in those places where no clouding passion intervenes, I should belie my own conscience, if I said less than that I think W. H. to be, in his natural and healthy state, one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing. So far from being ashamed of that intimacy which was betwixt us, it is my boast that I was able for so many years to have preserved it entire; and I think I shall go to my grave without finding or expecting to find such another companion." Thus does one royalty celebrate the kingship and enrich the immortality of another.

CONTENTS

LECTURES ON THE ENGLISH COMIC WRITERS

LECTURE I

PAGE
Introductory—On Wit and Humour 5

LECTURE II

On Shakspeare and Ben Jonson 30

LECTURE III

On Cowley, Butler, Suckling, Etherege, etc. . . 49

LECTURE IV

On Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar . 70

LECTURE V

On the Periodical Essayists 91

LECTURE VI

On the English Novelists 106

LECTURE VII

On the Works of Hogarth. On the Grand and Familiar Style of Painting 133

LECTURE VIII

On the Comic Writers of the Last Century . . . 149

FUGITIVE WRITINGS

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The Fight 171
Merry England 185

PAGE
Of Persons One would Wish to have Seen . . . 196
On a Sun-dial 208
Why the Heroes of Romance are insipid . . . 216
The Shyness of Scholars 225
The Main-Chance 235
Self-love and Benevolence 252
The Same Subject continued 261
The Free Admission 276
The Sick Chamber 282
Footmen 288

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE

On the Want of Money 293
On the Feeling of Immortality in Youth . . . 307
On Reading New Books 318
On Disagreeable People 330

LECTURES ON THE ENGLISH COMIC WRITERS

LECTURES ON
THE COMIC WRITERS, ETC.
OF GREAT BRITAIN

LECTURE I.—INTRODUCTORY

ON WIT AND HUMOUR

MAN is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only nimal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and vhat they ought to be. We weep at what thwarts or exceeds our desires n serious matters: we laugh at what only disappoints our expectations n trifles. We shed tears from sympathy with real and necessary listress; as we burst into laughter from want of sympathy with that vhich is unreasonable and unnecessary, the absurdity of which rovokes our spleen or mirth, rather than any serious reflections on it.

To explain the nature of laughter and tears, is to account for the ondition of human life; for it is in a manner compounded of these wo! It is a tragedy or a comedy—sad or merry, as it happens. The crimes and misfortunes that are inseparable from it, shock and vound the mind when they once seize upon it, and when the pressure an no longer be borne, seek relief in tears: the follies and absurdities hat men commit, or the odd accidents that befal them, afford us musement from the very rejection of these false claims upon our ympathy, and end in laughter. If every thing that went wrong, if very vanity or weakness in another gave us a sensible pang, it would e hard indeed: but as long as the disagreeableness of the consequences of a sudden disaster is kept out of sight by the immediate ddity of the circumstances, and the absurdity or unaccountableness of foolish action is the most striking thing in it, the ludicrous prevails ver the pathetic, and we receive pleasure instead of pain from the arce of life which is played before us, and which discomposes our ravity as often as it fails to move our anger or our pity!

Tears may be considered as the natural and involuntary resource of the mind overcome by some sudden and violent emotion, before it has had time to reconcile its feelings to the change of circumstances: while laughter may be defined to be the same sort of convulsive and involuntary movement, occasioned by mere surprise or contrast (in the absence of any more serious emotion), before it has time to reconcile its belief to contradictory appearances. If we hold a mask before our face, and approach a child with this disguise on, it will at first, from the oddity and incongruity of the appearance, be inclined to laugh; if we go nearer to it, steadily, and without saying a word, it will begin to be alarmed, and be half inclined to cry: if we suddenly take off the mask, it will recover from its fears, and burst out a-laughing; but if, instead of presenting the old well-known countenance, we have concealed a satyr's head or some frightful caricature behind the first mask, the suddenness of the change will not in this case be a source of merriment to it, but will convert its surprise into an agony of consternation, and will make it scream out for help, even though it may be convinced that the whole is a trick at bottom.

The alternation of tears and laughter, in this little episode in common life, depends almost entirely on the greater or less degree of interest attached to the different changes of appearance. The mere suddenness of the transition, the mere baulking our expectations, and turning them abruptly into another channel, seems to give additional liveliness and gaiety to the animal spirits; but the instant the change is not only sudden, but threatens serious consequences, or calls up the shape of danger, terror supersedes our disposition to mirth, and laughter gives place to tears. It is usual to play with infants, and make them laugh by clapping your hands suddenly before them; but if you clap your hands too loud, or too near their sight, their countenances immediately change, and they hide them in the nurse's arms. Or suppose the same child, grown up a little older, comes to a place, expecting to meet a person it is particularly fond of, and does not find that person there, its countenance suddenly falls, its lips begin to quiver, its cheek turns pale, its eye glistens, and it vents its little sorrow (grown too big to be concealed) in a flood of tears. Again, if the child meets the same person unexpectedly after long absence, the same effect will be produced by an excess of joy, with different accompaniments; that is, the surprise and the emotion excited will make the blood come into his face, his eyes sparkle, his tongue falter or be mute, but in either case the tears will gush to his relief, and lighten the pressure about his heart. On the other hand, if a child is playing at hide-and-seek, or blindman's-buff, with persons it is ever so fond of, and either misses them where it had made sure of finding

em, or suddenly runs up against them where it had least expected
, the shock or additional impetus given to the imagination by the
isappointment or the discovery, in a matter of this indifference, will
nly vent itself in a fit of laughter.[1] The transition here is not from
ne thing of importance to another, or from a state of indifference to
state of strong excitement; but merely from one impression to
nother that we did not at all expect, and when we had expected just
e contrary. The mind having been led to form a certain conclusion,
nd the result producing an immediate solution of continuity in the
hain of our ideas, this alternate excitement and relaxation of the
nagination, the object also striking upon the mind more vividly in its
ose unsettled state, and before it has had time to recover and collect
self, causes that alternate excitement and relaxation, or irregular
onvulsive movement of the muscular and nervous system, which
onstitutes physical laughter. The *discontinuous* in our sensations
roduces a correspondent jar and discord in the frame. The
eadiness of our faith and of our features begins to give way at the
ame time. We turn with an incredulous smile from a story that
aggers our belief: and we are ready to split our sides with laughing
t an extravagance that sets all common sense and serious concern at
efiance.

To understand or define the ludicrous, we must first know what
e serious is. Now the serious is the habitual stress which the mind
ys upon the expectation of a given order of events, following one
nother with a certain regularity and weight of interest attached to
em. When this stress is increased beyond its usual pitch of
tensity, so as to overstrain the feelings by the violent opposition of
ood to bad, or of objects to our desires, it becomes the pathetic or
agical. The ludicrous, or comic, is the unexpected loosening or
laxing this stress below its usual pitch of intensity, by such an
rupt transposition of the order of our ideas, as taking the mind
awares, throws it off its guard, startles it into a lively sense of
easure, and leaves no time nor inclination for painful reflections.

The essence of the laughable then is the incongruous, the discon-
ecting one idea from another, or the jostling of one feeling against
nother. The first and most obvious cause of laughter is to be found
the simple succession of events, as in the sudden shifting of a
isguise, or some unlooked-for accident, without any absurdity of
aracter or situation. The accidental contradiction between our
xpectations and the event can hardly be said, however, to amount to

---

[1] A child that has hid itself out of the way in sport, is under a great temptation
laugh at the unconsciousness of others as to its situation. A person concealed
om assassins, is in no danger of betraying his situation by laughing.

the ludicrous: it is merely laughable. The ludicrous is where there is the same contradiction between the object and our expectations, heightened by some deformity or inconvenience, that is, by its being contrary to what is customary or desirable; as the ridiculous, which is the highest degree of the laughable, is that which is contrary not only to custom but to sense and reason, or is a voluntary departure from what we have a right to expect from those who are conscious of absurdity and propriety in words, looks, and actions.

Of these different kinds or degrees of the laughable, the first is the most shallow and short-lived; for the instant the immediate surprise of a thing's merely happening one way or another is over, there is nothing to throw us back upon our former expectation, and renew our wonder at the event a second time. The second sort, that is, the ludicrous arising out of the improbable or distressing, is more deep and lasting, either because the painful catastrophe excites a greater curiosity, or because the old impression, from its habitual hold on the imagination, still recurs mechanically, so that it is longer before we can seriously make up our minds to the unaccountable deviation from it. The third sort, or the ridiculous arising out of absurdity as well as improbability, that is, where the defect or weakness is of a man's own seeking, is the most refined of all, but not always so pleasant as the last, because the same contempt and disapprobation which sharpens and subtilises our sense of the impropriety, adds a severity to it inconsistent with perfect ease and enjoyment. This last species is properly the province of satire. The principle of contrast is, however, the same in all the stages, in the simply laughable, the ludicrous, the ridiculous; and the effect is only the more complete, the more durably and pointedly this principle operates.

To give some examples in these different kinds. We laugh, when children, at the sudden removing of a pasteboard mask: we laugh, when grown up, more gravely at the tearing off the mask of deceit. We laugh at absurdity; we laugh at deformity. We laugh at a bottle-nose in a caricature; at a stuffed figure of an alderman in a pantomime, and at the tale of Slaukenbergius. A giant standing by a dwarf makes a contemptible figure enough. Rosinante and Dapple are laughable from contrast, as their masters from the same principle make two for a pair. We laugh at the dress of foreigners, and they at ours. Three chimney-sweepers meeting three Chinese in Lincoln's-inn Fields, they laughed at one another till they were ready to drop down. Country people laugh at a person because they never saw him before. Any one dressed in the height of the fashion, or quite out of it, is equally an object of ridicule. One rich source of the ludicrous is distress with which we cannot sympathise from its absurdity or insignificance. Women laugh at their lovers. We laugh at a damned author, in spite of our teeth, and though he may be our friend. 'There is something in the misfortunes of our best friends that pleases us.' We laugh at people on the top of a stage-coach, or in it, if they seem in great extremity. It is hard to hinder children from laughing at a stammerer, at a negro, at a drunken man, or even at a madman. We laugh at mischief. We laugh at what we do not believe. We say that an argument or an assertion that is very absurd, is quite ludicrous. We laugh to shew our satisfaction with ourselves, or our contempt for those about us, or to conceal our envy or our ignorance. We laugh at fools, and at those who pretend to be wise—at extreme simplicity, awkwardness, hypocrisy, and affectation. 'They were talking of me,' says Scrub, 'for they laughed *consumedly*.' Lord Foppington's insensibility to ridicule, and airs of ineffable self-conceit, are no less admirable; and Joseph Surface's cant maxims of morality, when once disarmed of their power to do hurt, become sufficiently ludicrous.— We laugh at that in others which is a serious matter to ourselves; because our self-love is stronger than our sympathy, sooner takes the alarm, and instantly turns our heedless mirth into gravity, which only enhances the jest to others. Some one is generally sure to be the sufferer by a joke. What is sport to one, is death to another. It is only very sensible or very honest people, who laugh as freely at their own absurdities as at those of their neighbours. In general the contrary rule holds, and we only laugh at those misfortunes in which we are spectators, not sharers. The injury, the disappointment, shame, and vexation that we feel, put a stop to our mirth; while the disasters that come home to us, and excite our repugnance and dismay, are an amusing spectacle to others. The greater resistance we make, and the greater the perplexity into which we are thrown, the more lively and *piquant* is the intellectual display of cross-purposes to the by-standers. Our humiliation is their triumph. We are occupied with the disagreeableness of the result instead of its oddity or unexpectedness. Others see only the conflict of motives, and the sudden alternation of events; we feel the pain as well, which more than counterbalances the speculative entertainment we might receive from the contemplation of our abstract situation.

You cannot force people to laugh: you cannot give a reason why they should laugh: they must laugh of themselves, or not at all. As we laugh from a spontaneous impulse, we laugh the more at any restraint upon this impulse. We laugh at a thing merely because we ought not. If we think we must not laugh, this perverse impediment makes our temptation to laugh the greater; for by endeavouring to keep the obnoxious image out of sight, it comes upon us more irresistibly and repeatedly; and the inclination to indulge our mirth the longer it is held back, collects its force, and breaks out the mor violently in peals of laughter. In like manner, any thing we must no think of makes us laugh, by its coming upon us by stealth an unawares, and from the very efforts we make to exclude it. A secret a loose word, a wanton jest, make people laugh. Aretine laughe himself to death at hearing a lascivious story. Wickedness is ofte made a substitute for wit; and in most of our good old comedies, th intrigue of the plot and the double meaning of the dialogue go hand in-hand, and keep up the ball with wonderful spirit between them The consciousness, however it may arise, that there is something tha we ought to look grave at, is almost always a signal for laughin outright: we can hardly keep our countenance at a sermon, a funeral or a wedding. What an excellent old custom was that of throwin the stocking! What a deal of innocent mirth has been spoiled b the disuse of it!—It is not an easy matter to preserve decorum i courts of justice. The smallest circumstance that interferes with th solemnity of the proceedings, throws the whole place into an uproa of laughter. People at the point of death often say smart things Sir Thomas More jested with his executioner. Rabelais an Wycherley both died with a *bon-mot* in their mouths.

Misunderstandings, (*malentendus*) where one person means on thing, and another is aiming at something else, are another grea source of comic humour, on the same principle of ambiguity an contrast. There is a high-wrought instance of this in the dialogu between Aimwell and Gibbet, in the Beaux' Stratagem, wher Aimwell mistakes his companion for an officer in a marching regiment, and Gibbet takes it for granted that the gentleman is a highwayman. The alarm and consternation occasioned by some one saying to him, in the course of common conversation, 'I apprehend you,' is the mos ludicrous thing in that admirably natural and powerful performance Mr. Emery's Robert Tyke. Again, unconsciousness in the perso himself of what he is about, or of what others think of him, is als a great heightener of the sense of absurdity. It makes it come th fuller home upon us from his insensibility to it. His simplicity set off the satire, and gives it a finer edge. It is a more extreme cas still where the person is aware of being the object of ridicule, and ye seems perfectly reconciled to it as a matter of course. So wit is ofte the more forcible and pointed for being dry and serious, for it the seems as if the speaker himself had no intention in it, and we wer the first to find it out. Irony, as a species of wit, owes its force t the same principle. In such cases it is the contrast between th appearance and the reality, the suspense of belief, and the seemin congruity, that gives point to the ridicule, and makes it enter the eeper when the first impression is overcome. Excessive impudence, in the Liar; or excessive modesty, as in the hero of She Stoops to onquer; or a mixture of the two, as in the Busy Body, are equally nusing. Lying is a species of wit and humour. To lay any thing a person's charge from which he is perfectly free, shews spirit and vention; and the more incredible the effrontery, the greater is the ke.

There is nothing more powerfully humorous than what is called *eping* in comic character, as we see it very finely exemplified in ancho Panza and Don Quixote. The proverbial phlegm and the mantic gravity of these two celebrated persons may be regarded as e height of this kind of excellence. The deep feeling of character rengthens the sense of the ludicrous. Keeping in comic character is onsistency in absurdity; a determined and laudable attachment to e incongruous and singular. The regularity completes the contraction; for the number of instances of deviation from the right line, anching out in all directions, shews the inveteracy of the original as to any extravagance or folly, the natural improbability, as it ere, increasing every time with the multiplication of chances for a turn to common sense, and in the end mounting up to an incredible d unaccountably ridiculous height, when we find our expectations invariably baffled. The most curious problem of all, is this truth absurdity to itself. That reason and good sense should be constent, is not wonderful: but that caprice, and whim, and fantastical ejudice, should be uniform and infallible in their results, is the rprising thing. But while this characteristic clue to absurdity helps the ridicule, it also softens and harmonises its excesses; and the dicrous is here blended with a certain beauty and decorum, from is very truth of habit and sentiment, or from the principle of nilitude in dissimilitude. The devotion to nonsense, and enthusim about trifles, is highly affecting as a moral lesson: it is one of the iking weaknesses and greatest happinesses of our nature. That nich excites so lively and lasting an interest in itself, even though it ould not be wisdom, is not despicable in the sight of reason and manity. We cannot suppress the smile on the lip; but the tear ould also stand ready to start from the eye. The history of hobbyrses is equally instructive and delightful; and after the pair I have st alluded to, My Uncle Toby's is one of the best and gentlest that ver lifted leg!' The inconveniences, odd accidents, falls, and uises, to which they expose their riders, contribute their share to e amusement of the spectators; and the blows and wounds that the night of the Sorrowful Countenance received in his many perilous adventures, have applied their healing influence to many a hurt mind. —In what relates to the laughable, as it arises from unforeseen accidents or self-willed scrapes, the pain, the shame, the mortification, and utter helplessness of situation, add to the joke, provided they are momentary, or overwhelming only to the imagination of the sufferer. Malvolio's punishment and apprehensions are as comic, from our knowing that they are not real, as Christopher Sly's drunken transformation and short-lived dream of happiness are for the like reason. Parson Adams's fall into the tub at the 'Squire's, or his being discovered in bed with Mrs. Slipslop, though pitiable, are laughable accidents: nor do we read with much gravity of the loss of his Æschylus, serious as it was to him at the time.—A Scotch clergyman, as he was going to church, seeing a spruce conceited mechanic who was walking before him, suddenly covered all over with dirt, either by falling into the kennel, or by some other calamity befalling him, smiled and passed on: but afterwards seeing the same person, who had stopped to refit, seated directly facing him in the gallery, with a look of perfect satisfaction and composure, as if nothing of the sort had happened to him, the idea of his late disaster and present self-complacency struck him so powerfully, that, unable to resist the impulse, he flung himself back in the pulpit, and laughed till he could laugh no longer. I remember reading a story in an odd number of the European Magazine, of an old gentleman who used to walk out every afternoon, with a gold-headed cane, in the fields opposite Baltimore House, which were then open, only with foot-paths crossing them. He was frequently accosted by a beggar with a wooden leg, to whom he gave money, which only made him more importunate. One day, when he was more troublesome than usual, a well-dressed person happening to come up, and observing how saucy the fellow was, said to the gentleman, 'Sir, if you will lend me your cane for a moment, I'll give him a good threshing for his impertinence.' The old gentleman, smiling at the proposal, handed him his cane, which the other no sooner was going to apply to the shoulders of the culprit, than he immediately whipped off his wooden leg, and scampered off with great alacrity, and his chastiser after him as hard as he could go. The faster the one ran, the faster the other followed him, brandishing the cane, to the great astonishment of the gentleman who owned it, till having fairly crossed the fields, they suddenly turned a corner, and nothing more was seen of either of them.

In the way of mischievous adventure, and a wanton exhibition o ludicrous weakness in character, nothing is superior to the comic parts of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. To take only the se of stories of the Little Hunchback, who was choked with a bone and the Barber of Bagdad and his seven brothers,—there is that of the tailor who was persecuted by the miller's wife, and who, after toiling all night in the mill, got nothing for his pains:—of another who fell in love with a fine lady who pretended to return his passion, and inviting him to her house, as the preliminary condition of her favour, had his eyebrows shaved, his clothes stripped off, and being turned loose into a winding gallery, he was to follow her, and by overtaking obtain all his wishes, but, after a turn or two, stumbled on a trap-door, and fell plump into the street, to the great astonishment of the spectators and his own, shorn of his eyebrows, naked, and without a ray of hope left:—that of the castle-building pedlar, who, in kicking his wife, the supposed daughter of an emperor, kicks down his basket of glass, the brittle foundation of his ideal wealth, his good fortune, and his arrogance:—that, again, of the beggar who dined with the Barmecide, and feasted with him on the names of wines and dishes: and, last and best of all, the inimitable story of the Impertinent Barber himself, one of the seven, and worthy to be so; his pertinacious, incredible, teasing, deliberate, yet unmeaning folly, his wearing out the patience of the young gentleman whom he is sent for to shave, his preparations and his professions of speed, his taking out an astrolabe to measure the height of the sun while his razors are getting ready, his dancing the dance of Zimri and singing the song of Zamtout, his disappointing the young man of an assignation, following him to the place of rendezvous, and alarming the master of the house in his anxiety for his safety, by which his unfortunate patron loses his hand in the affray, and this is felt as an awkward accident. The danger which the same loquacious person is afterwards in, of losing his head for want of saying who he was, because he would not forfeit his character of being 'justly called the Silent,' is a consummation of the jest, though, if it had really taken place, it would have been carrying the joke too far. There are a thousand instances of the same sort in the Thousand and One Nights, which are an inexhaustible mine of comic humour and invention, and which, from the manners of the East which they describe, carry the principle of callous indifference in a jest as far as it can go. The serious and marvellous stories in that work, which have been so much admired and so greedily read, appear to me monstrous and abortive fictions, like disjointed dreams, dictated by a preternatural dread of arbitrary and despotic power, as the comic and familiar stories are rendered proportionably amusing and interesting from the same principle operating in a different direction, and producing endless uncertainty and vicissitude, and an heroic contempt for the untoward accidents and petty vexations of human life. It is the gaiety of despair, the mirth and laughter of a respite during pleasure from death. The strongest instances of effectual and harrowing imagination, are in the story of Amine and her three sisters, whom she led by her side as a leash of hounds, and of the *goul* who nibbled grains of rice for her dinner, and preyed on human carcasses. In this condemnation of the serious parts of the Arabian Nights, I have nearly all the world, and in particular the author of the Ancient Mariner, against me, who must be allowed to be a judge of such matters, and who said, with a subtlety of philosophical conjecture which he alone possesses, 'That if I did not like them, it was because I did not dream.' On the other hand, I have Bishop Atterbury on my side, who, in a letter to Pope, fairly confesses that 'he could not read them in his old age.'

There is another source of comic humour which has been but little touched on or attended to by the critics—not the infliction of casual pain, but the pursuit of uncertain pleasure and idle gallantry. Half the business and gaiety of comedy turns upon this. Most of the adventures, difficulties, demurs, hair-breadth 'scapes, disguises, deceptions, blunders, disappointments, successes, excuses, all the dextrous manœuvres, artful inuendos, assignations, billets-doux, *double entendres*, sly allusions, and elegant flattery, have an eye to this—to the obtaining of those 'favours secret, sweet, and precious,' in which love and pleasure consist, and which when attained, and the *equivoque* is at an end, the curtain drops, and the play is over. All the attractions of a subject that can only be glanced at indirectly, that is a sort of forbidden ground to the imagination, except under severe restrictions, which are constantly broken through; all the resources it supplies for intrigue and invention; the bashfulness of the clownish lover, his looks of alarm and petrified astonishment; the foppish affectation and easy confidence of the happy man; the dress, the airs, the languor, the scorn, and indifference of the fine lady; the bustle, pertness, loquaciousness, and tricks of the chambermaid; the impudence, lies, and roguery of the valet; the match-making and unmaking; the wisdom of the wise; the sayings of the witty, the folly of the fool; 'the soldier's, scholar's, courtier's eye, tongue, sword, the glass of fashion and the mould of form,' have all a view to this. It is the closet in Blue-Beard. It is the life and soul of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar's plays. It is the salt of comedy, without which it would be worthless and insipid. It makes Horner decent, and Millamant divine. It is the jest between Tattle and Miss Prue. It is the bait with which Olivia, in the Plain Dealer, plays with honest Manly. It lurks at the bottom of the catechism which Archer teaches Cherry, and which she learns by heart. It gives the finishing grace to Mrs. Amlet's confession—'Though I'm old, I'm chaste.'

Valentine and his Angelica would be nothing without it; Miss Peggy would not be worth a gallant; and Slender's 'sweet Ann Page' would be no more! 'The age of comedy would be gone, and the glory of our play-houses extinguished for ever.' Our old comedies would be invaluable, were it only for this, that they keep alive this entiment, which still survives in all its fluttering grace and breathless palpitations on the stage.

Humour is the describing the ludicrous as it is in itself; wit is the exposing it, by comparing or contrasting it with something else. Humour is, as it were, the growth of nature and accident; wit is the product of art and fancy. Humour, as it is shewn in books, is an mitation of the natural or acquired absurdities of mankind, or of the udicrous in accident, situation, and character: wit is the illustrating and heightening the sense of that absurdity by some sudden and unexpected likeness or opposition of one thing to another, which sets off the quality we laugh at or despise in a still more contemptible or triking point of view. Wit, as distinguished from poetry, is the magination or fancy inverted, and so applied to given objects, as to make the little look less, the mean more light and worthless; or to divert our admiration or wean our affections from that which is lofty and impressive, instead of producing a more intense admiration and exalted passion, as poetry does. Wit may sometimes, indeed, be hewn in compliments as well as satire; as in the common epigram—

> 'Accept a miracle, instead of wit:
> See two dull lines with Stanhope's pencil writ.'

But then the mode of paying it is playful and ironical, and contradicts tself in the very act of making its own performance an humble foil o another's. Wit hovers round the borders of the light and trifling, whether in matters of pleasure or pain; for as soon as it describes the erious seriously, it ceases to be wit, and passes into a different form. Wit is, in fact, the eloquence of indifference, or an ingenious and triking exposition of those evanescent and glancing impressions of bjects which affect us more from surprise or contrast to the train of ur ordinary and literal preconceptions, than from anything in the bjects themselves exciting our necessary sympathy or lasting hatred. The favourite employment of wit is to add littleness to littleness, and eap contempt on insignificance by all the arts of petty and incessant warfare; or if it ever affects to aggrandise, and use the language of yperbole, it is only to betray into derision by a fatal comparison, as n the mock-heroic; or if it treats of serious passion, it must do it so s to lower the tone of intense and high-wrought sentiment, by the ntroduction of burlesque and familiar circumstances. To give an

instance or two. Butler, in his Hudibras, compares the change c
night into day, to the change of colour in a boiled lobster.

> 'The sun had long since, in the lap
> Of Thetis, taken out his nap;
> And, like a lobster boil'd, the morn
> From black to red, began to turn:
> When Hudibras, whom thoughts and aching
> 'Twixt sleeping kept all night, and waking,
> Began to rub his drowsy eyes,
> And from his couch prepared to rise,
> Resolving to dispatch the deed
> He vow'd to do with trusty speed.'

Compare this with the following stanzas in Spenser, treating of th
same subject:—

> 'By this the Northern Waggoner had set
> His seven-fold team behind the stedfast star,
> That was in Ocean waves yet never wet,
> But firm is fix'd and sendeth light from far
> To all that in the wide deep wand'ring are:
> And cheerful chanticleer with his note shrill,
> Had warned once that Phœbus' fiery car
> In haste was climbing up the eastern hill,
> Full envious that night so long his room did fill.
>
> At last the golden oriental gate
> Of greatest heaven 'gan to open fair,
> And Phœbus, fresh as bridegroom to his mate,
> Came dancing forth, shaking his dewy hair,
> And hurl'd his glist'ring beams through gloomy air·
> Which when the wakeful elf perceiv'd, straitway
> He started up and did himself prepare
> In sun-bright arms and battailous array,
> For with that pagan proud he combat will that day.'

In this last passage, every image is brought forward that can giv
effect to our natural impression of the beauty, the splendour, an
solemn grandeur of the rising sun; pleasure and power wait on ever
line and word: whereas, in the other, the only memorable thing is
grotesque and ludicrous illustration of the alteration which takes plac
from darkness to gorgeous light, and that brought from the lowes
instance, and with associations that can only disturb and perplex th
imagination in its conception of the real object it describes. Ther
cannot be a more witty, and at the same time degrading comparison

than that in the same author, of the Bear turning round the pole-star to a bear tied to a stake:—

> 'But now a sport more formidable
> Had raked together village rabble;
> 'Twas an old way of recreating
> Which learned butchers call bear-baiting,
> A bold adventurous exercise
> With ancient heroes in high prize,
> For authors do affirm it came
> From Isthmian or Nemæan game;
> Others derive it from the Bear
> That's fixed in Northern hemisphere,
> And round about his pole does make
> A circle like a bear at stake,
> That at the chain's end wheels about
> And overturns the rabble rout.'

I need not multiply examples of this sort.—Wit or ludicrous invention produces its effect oftenest by comparison, but not always. It frequently effects its purposes by unexpected and subtle distinctions. For instance, in the first kind, Mr. Sheridan's description of Mr. Addington's administration as the fag-end of Mr. Pitt's, who had remained so long on the treasury bench that, like Nicias in the fable, 'he left the sitting part of the man behind him,' is as fine an example of metaphorical wit as any on record. The same idea seems, however, to have been included in the old well-known nickname of the *Rump* Parliament. Almost as happy an instance of the other kind of wit, which consists in sudden retorts, in turns upon an idea, and diverting the train of your adversary's argument abruptly and adroitly into another channel, may be seen in the sarcastic reply of Porson, who hearing some one observe that 'certain modern poets would be read and admired when Homer and Virgil were forgotten,' made answer—'And not till then!' Sir Robert Walpole's definition of the gratitude of place-expectants, 'That it is a lively sense of *future* favours,' is no doubt wit, but it does not consist in the finding out any coincidence or likeness, but in suddenly transposing the order of time in the common account of this feeling, so as to make the professions of those who pretend to it correspond more with their practice. It is filling up a blank in the human heart with a word that explains its hollowness at once. Voltaire's saying, in answer to a stranger who was observing how tall his trees grew—'That they had nothing else to do'—was a quaint mixture of wit and humour, making it out as if they really led a lazy, laborious life; but there was here neither allusion or metaphor. Again, that master-stroke in Hudibras is sterling wit and profound satire, where speaking of certain religious hypocrites he says, that they

> 'Compound for sins they are inclin'd to,
> By damning those they have no mind to;'

but the wit consists in the truth of the character, and in the happy exposure of the ludicrous contradiction between the pretext and the practice; between their lenity towards their own vices, and their severity to those of others. The same principle of nice distinction must be allowed to prevail in those lines of the same author, where he is professing to expound the dreams of judicial astrology.

> 'There's but the twinkling of a star
> Betwixt a man of peace and war,
> A thief and justice, fool and knave,
> A huffing officer and a slave;
> A crafty lawyer and pickpocket;
> A great philosopher and a blockhead;
> A formal preacher and a player;
> A learn'd physician and man slayer.'

The finest piece of wit I know of, is in the lines of Pope on the Lord Mayor's show—

> 'Now night descending, the proud scene is o'er,
> But lives in Settle's numbers one day more.'

This is certainly as mortifying an inversion of the idea of poetical immortality as could be thought of; it fixes the *maximum* of littleness and insignificance: but it is not by likeness to any thing else that it does this, but by literally taking the lowest possible duration of ephemeral reputation, marking it (as with a slider) on the scale of endless renown, and giving a rival credit for it as his loftiest praise. In a word, the shrewd separation or disentangling of ideas that seem the same, or where the secret contradiction is not sufficiently suspected, and is of a ludicrous and whimsical nature, is wit just as much as the bringing together those that appear at first sight totally different. There is then no sufficient ground for admitting Mr. Locke's celebrated definition of wit, which he makes to consist in the finding out striking and unexpected resemblances in things so as to make pleasant pictures in the fancy, while judgment and reason, according to him, lie the clean contrary way, in separating and nicely distinguishing those wherein the smallest difference is to be found.[1]

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[1] His words are—'If in having our ideas in the memory ready at hand consists quickness of parts, in this of having them unconfused, and being able nicely to

On this definition Harris, the author of Hermes, has very well observed that the demonstrating the equality of the three angles of a right-angled triangle to two right ones, would, upon the principle here stated, be a piece of wit instead of an act of the judgment, or understanding, and Euclid's Elements a collection of epigrams. On the contrary it has appeared, that the detection and exposure of difference, particularly where this implies nice and subtle observation, as in discriminating between pretence and practice, between appearance and reality, is common to wit and satire with judgment and reasoning, and certainly the comparing and connecting our ideas together is an essential part of reason and judgment, as well as of wit and fancy.—Mere wit, as opposed to reason or argument, consists in striking out some casual and partial coincidence which has nothing to do, or at least implies no necessary connection with the nature of the things, which are forced into a seeming analogy by a play upon words, or some irrelevant conceit, as in puns, riddles, alliteration, &c. The jest, in all such cases, lies in the sort of mock-identity, or nominal resemblance, established by the intervention of the same words expressing different ideas, and countenancing as it were, by a fatality of language, the mischievous insinuation which the person who has

distinguish one thing from another, where there is but the least difference, consists in a great measure the exactness of judgment and clearness of reason, which is to be observed in one man above another. And hence, perhaps, may be given some reason of that common observation, that men who have a great deal of wit and prompt memories, have not always the clearest judgment or deepest reason. For wit lying mostly in the assemblage of ideas, and putting them together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy; judgment, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another.' (*Essay*, vol. i. p. 143.) This definition, such as it is, Mr. Locke took without acknowledgment from Hobbes, who says in his Leviathan, 'This difference of quickness in imagining is caused by the difference of men's passions, that love and dislike some one thing, some another, and therefore some men's thoughts run one way, some another, and are held to and observe differently the things that pass through their imagination. And whereas in this succession of thoughts there is nothing to observe in the things they think on, but either in what they be like one another, or in what they be unlike, those that observe their similitudes, in case they be such as are but rarely observed by others, are said to have a good wit, by which is meant on this occasion a good fancy. But they that observe their differences and dissimilitudes, which is called distinguishing and discerning and judging between thing and thing; in case such discerning be not easy, are said to have a good judgment; and particularly in matter of conversation and business, wherein times, places, and persons are to be discerned, this virtue is called discretion. The former, that is, fancy, without the help of judgment, is not commended for a virtue; but the latter, which is judgment or discretion, is commended for itself, without the help of fancy.' *Leviathan*, p. 32.

the wit to take advantage of it wishes to convey. So when th
disaffected French wits applied to the new order of the *Fleur du ly*
the *double entendre* of *Compagnons d'Ulysse*, or companions of Ulysses
meaning the animal into which the fellow-travellers of the hero of th
Odyssey were transformed, this was a shrewd and biting intimation o
a galling truth (if truth it were) by a fortuitous concourse of letter
of the alphabet, jumping in 'a foregone conclusion,' but there was n
proof of the thing, unless it was self-evident. And, indeed, this ma
be considered as the best defence of the contested maxim—*Tha*
ridicule is the test of truth ; viz. that it does not contain or attempt
formal proof of it, but owes its power of conviction to the bar
suggestion of it, so that if the thing when once hinted is not clear i
itself, the satire fails of its effect and falls to the ground. Th
sarcasm here glanced at the character of the new or old Frenc
noblesse may not be well founded ; but it is so like truth, and 'come
in such a questionable shape,' backed with the appearance of a
identical proposition, that it would require a long train of facts an
laboured arguments to do away the impression, even if we were sure o
the honesty and wisdom of the person who undertook to refute it. A
flippant jest is as good a test of truth as a solid bribe ; and there ar
serious sophistries,

> 'Soul-killing lies, and truths that work small good,'

as well as idle pleasantries. Of this we may be sure, that ridicul
fastens on the vulnerable points of a cause, and finds out the weak
sides of an argument ; if those who resort to it sometimes rely to
much on its success, those who are chiefly annoyed by it almos
always are so with reason, and cannot be too much on their guar
against deserving it. Before we can laugh at a thing, its absurdit
must at least be open and palpable to common apprehension. Ridicul
is necessarily built on certain supposed facts, whether true or false,
and on their inconsistency with certain acknowledged maxims,
whether right or wrong. It is, therefore, a fair test, if not of philosophical or abstract truth, at least of what is truth according to publi
opinion and common sense ; for it can only expose to instantaneou
contempt that which is condemned by public opinion, and is hostile t
the common sense of mankind. Or to put it differently, it is the tes
of the quantity of truth that there is in our favourite prejudices.—T
shew how nearly allied wit is thought to be to truth, it is not unusua
to say of any person—'Such a one is a man of sense, for though h
said nothing, he laughed in the right place.'—Alliteration comes i
here under the head of a certain sort of verbal wit ; or, by pointin
the expression, sometimes points the sense. Mr. Grattan's wit o

eloquence (I don't know by what name to call it) would be nothing without this accompaniment. Speaking of some ministers whom he did not like, he said, 'Their only means of government are the guinea and the gallows.' There can scarcely, it must be confessed, be a more effectual mode of political conversion than one of these applied to a man's friends, and the other to himself. The fine sarcasm of Junius on the effect of the supposed ingratitude of the Duke of Grafton at court—'The instance might be painful, but the principle would please'—notwithstanding the profound insight into human nature it implies, would hardly pass for wit without the alliteration, as some poetry would hardly be acknowledged as such without the rhyme to clench it. A quotation or a hackneyed phrase dextrously turned or wrested to another purpose, has often the effect of the liveliest wit. An idle fellow who had only fourpence left in the world, which had been put by to pay for the baking some meat for his dinner, went and laid it out to buy a new string for a guitar. An old acquaintance on hearing this story, repeated those lines out of the Allegro—

'And ever against *eating* cares
Lap me in soft Lydian airs.'

The reply of the author of the periodical paper called the World to a lady at church, who seeing him look thoughtful, asked what he was thinking of—'The next World,'—is a perversion of an established formula of language, something of the same kind.—Rhymes are sometimes a species of wit, where there is an alternate combination and resolution or decomposition of the elements of sound, contrary to our usual division and classification of them in ordinary speech, not unlike the sudden separation and re-union of the component parts of the machinery in a pantomime. The author who excels infinitely the most in this way is the writer of Hudibras. He also excels in the invention of single words and names which have the effect of wit by sounding big, and meaning nothing:—'full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' But of the artifices of this author's burlesque style I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.—It is not always easy to distinguish between the wit of words and that of things. 'For thin partitions do their bounds divide.' Some of the late Mr. Curran's *bon mots* or *jeux d'esprit*, might be said to owe their birth to this sort of equivocal generation; or were a happy mixture of verbal wit and a lively and picturesque fancy, of legal acuteness in detecting the variable application of words, and of a mind apt at perceiving the ludicrous in external objects. 'Do you see any thing ridiculous in this wig?' said one of his brother judges to him. 'Nothing but the head,' was the answer. Now here instantaneous advantage was take of the slight technical ambiguity in the construction of language, an the matter-of-fact is flung into the scale as a thumping makeweight After all, verbal and accidental strokes of wit, though the mos surprising and laughable, are not the best and most lasting. Tha wit is the most refined and effectual, which is founded on the detectio of unexpected likeness or distinction in things, rather than in words It is more severe and galling, that is, it is more unpardonable thoug less surprising, in proportion as the thought suggested is more com plete and satisfactory, from its being inherent in the nature of th things themselves. *Hæret lateri lethalis arundo.* Truth makes th greatest libel; and it is that which barbs the darts of wit. Th Duke of Buckingham's saying, 'Laws are not, like women, the wors for being old,' is an instance of a harmless truism and the utmos malice of wit united. This is, perhaps, what has been mear by the distinction between true and false wit. Mr. Addison, indee goes so far as to make it the exclusive test of true wit that it will bea translation into another language, that is to say, that it does not depen at all on the form of expression. But this is by no means the case Swift would hardly have allowed of such a strait-laced theory, t make havoc with his darling conundrums; though there is no on whose serious wit is more that of things, as opposed to a mere pla either of words or fancy. I ought, I believe, to have noticed before in speaking of the difference between wit and humour, that wit i often pretended absurdity, where the person overacts or exaggerates certain part with a conscious design to expose it as if it were anothe person, as when Mandrake in the Twin Rivals says, 'This glass too big, carry it away, I'll drink out of the bottle.' On the contrary when Sir Hugh Evans says very innocently, ''Od's plessed will, will not be absence at the grace,' though there is here a great deal humour, there is no wit. This kind of wit of the humorist, wher the person makes a butt of himself, and exhibits his own absurditie or foibles purposely in the most pointed and glaring lights, rur through the whole of the character of Falstaff, and is, in truth, th principle on which it is founded. It is an irony directed again one's-self. Wit is, in fact, a voluntary act of the mind, or exercis of the invention, shewing the absurd and ludicrous consciousl whether in ourselves or another. Cross-readings, where the blunde are designed, are wit: but if any one were to light upon them throug ignorance or accident, they would be merely ludicrous.

It might be made an argument of the intrinsic superiority of poetr or imagination to wit, that the former does not admit of mere verb combinations. Whenever they do occur, they are uniforml blemishes. It requires something more solid and substantial to raise admiration or passion. The general forms and aggregate masses of our ideas must be brought more into play, to give weight and magnitude. Imagination may be said to be the finding out something similar in things generally alike, or with like feelings attached to them; while wit principally aims at finding out something that seems the same, or amounts to a momentary deception where you least expected it, viz. in things totally opposite. The reason why more slight and partial, or merely accidental and nominal resemblances serve the purposes of wit, and indeed characterise its essence as a distinct operation and faculty of the mind, is, that the object of ludicrous poetry is naturally to let down and lessen; and it is easier to let down than to raise up, to weaken than to strengthen, to disconnect our sympathy from passion and power, than to attach and rivet it to any object of grandeur or interest, to startle and shock our preconceptions by incongruous and equivocal combinations, than to confirm, enforce, and expand them by powerful and lasting associations of ideas, or striking and true analogies. A slight cause is sufficient to produce a slight effect. To be indifferent or sceptical, requires no effort; to be enthusiastic and in earnest, requires a strong impulse, and collective power. Wit and humour (comparatively speaking, or taking the extremes to judge of the gradations by) appeal to our indolence, our vanity, our weakness, and insensibility; serious and impassioned poetry appeals to our strength, our magnanimity, our virtue, and humanity. Any thing is sufficient to heap contempt upon an object; even the bare suggestion of a mischievous allusion to what is improper, dissolves the whole charm, and puts an end to our admiration of the sublime or beautiful. Reading the finest passage in Milton's Paradise Lost in a false tone, will make it seem insipid and absurd. The cavilling at, or invidiously pointing out, a few slips of the pen, will embitter the pleasure, or alter our opinion of a whole work, and make us throw it down in disgust. The critics are aware of this vice and infirmity in our nature, and play upon it with periodical success. The meanest weapons are strong enough for this kind of warfare, and the meanest hands can wield them. Spleen can subsist on any kind of food. The shadow of a doubt, the hint of an inconsistency, a word, a look, a syllable, will destroy our best-formed convictions. What puts this argument in as striking a point of view as any thing, is the nature of parody or burlesque, the secret of which lies merely in transposing or applying at a venture to any thing, or to the lowest objects, that which is applicable only to certain given things, or to the highest matters. 'From the sublime to the ridiculous, there is but one step.' The slightest want of unity of impression destroys the sublime; the detection of the smallest incongruity is an infallible ground to rest the ludicrous upon. But in serious poetry, which aims at rivetting our affections, every blow must tell home. The missing a single time is fatal, and undoes the spell. We see how difficult it is to sustain a continued flight of impressive sentiment: how easy it must be then to travestie or burlesque it, to flounder into nonsense, and be witty by playing the fool. It is a common mistake, however, to suppose that parodies degrade, or imply a stigma on the subject: on the contrary, they in general imply something serious or sacred in the originals. Without this, they would be good for nothing; for the immediate contrast would be wanting, and with this they are sure to tell. The best parodies are accordingly, the best and most striking things reversed. Witness the common travesties of Homer and Virgil. Mr. Canning's cour parodies on Mr. Southey's popular odes, are also an instance in point (I do not know which were the cleverest); and the best of the Rejected Addresses is the parody on Crabbe, though I do no certainly think that Crabbe is the most ridiculous poet now living.

Lear and the Fool are the sublimest instance I know of passion and wit united, or of imagination unfolding the most tremendou sufferings, and of burlesque on passion playing with it, aiding and relieving its intensity by the most pointed, but familiar and indifferen illustrations of the same thing in different objects, and on a meane scale. The Fool's reproaching Lear with 'making his daughters hi mothers,' his snatches of proverbs and old ballads, 'The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long, that it had its head bit off by its young,' and 'Whoop jug, I know when the horse follows the cart,' are a runnin commentary of trite truisms, pointing out the extreme folly of th infatuated old monarch, and in a manner reconciling us to its inevitabl consequences.

Lastly, there is a wit of sense and observation, which consists i the acute illustration of good sense and practical wisdom, by means o some far-fetched conceit or quaint imagery. The matter is sense, bu the form is wit. Thus the lines in Pope—

> '''Tis with our judgments as our watches, none
> Go just alike; yet each believes his own——'

are witty, rather than poetical; because the truth they convey is mere dry observation on human life, without elevation or enthusiasm and the illustration of it is of that quaint and familiar kind that merely curious and fanciful. Cowley is an instance of the same kin in almost all his writings. Many of the jests and witticisms in th best comedies are moral aphorisms and rules for the conduct of life sparkling with wit and fancy in the mode of expression. The ancient philosophers also abounded in the same kind of wit, in telling home truths in the most unexpected manner.—In this sense Æsop was the greatest wit and moralist that ever lived. Ape and slave, he looked askance at human nature, and beheld its weaknesses and errors transferred to another species. Vice and virtue were to him as plain as any objects of sense. He saw in man a talking, absurd, obstinate, proud, angry animal; and clothed these abstractions with wings, or a beak, or tail, or claws, or long ears, as they appeared embodied in these hieroglyphics in the brute creation. His moral philosophy is natural history. He makes an ass bray wisdom, and a frog croak humanity. The store of moral truth, and the fund of invention in exhibiting it in eternal forms, palpable and intelligible, and delightful to children and grown persons, and to all ages and nations, are almost miraculous. The invention of a fable is to me the most enviable exertion of human genius: it is the discovering a truth to which there is no clue, and which, when once found out, can never be forgotten. I would rather have been the author of Æsop's Fables, than of Euclid's Elements!—That popular entertainment, Punch and the Puppet-show, owes part of its irresistible and universal attraction to nearly the same principle of inspiring inanimate and mechanical agents with sense and consciousness. The drollery and wit of a piece of wood is doubly droll and farcical. Punch is not merry in himself, but 'he is the cause of heartfelt mirth in other men.' The wires and pulleys that govern his motions are conductors to carry off the spleen, and all 'that perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart.' If we see a number of people turning the corner of a street, ready to burst with secret satisfaction, and with their faces bathed in laughter, we know what is the matter—that they are just come from a puppet-show. Who can see three little painted, patched-up figures, no bigger than one's thumb, strut, squeak and gibber, sing, dance, chatter, scold, knock one another about the head, give themselves airs of importance, and 'imitate humanity most abominably,' without laughing immoderately? We overlook the farce and mummery of human life in little, and for nothing; and what is still better, it costs them who have to play in it nothing. We place the mirth, and glee, and triumph, to our own account; and we know that the bangs and blows they have received go for nothing, as soon as the showman puts them up in his box and marches off quietly with them, as jugglers of a less amusing description sometimes march off with the wrongs and rights of mankind in their pockets!—I have heard no bad judge of such matters say, that 'he liked a comedy better than a tragedy, a farce better than a comedy, a pantomime better than a farce, but a puppet-show best of all.' I look upon it, that he who invented puppet-shows was a greater benefactor to his species, than he who invented Operas!

I shall conclude this imperfect and desultory sketch of wit and humour with Barrow's celebrated description of the same subject He says, '—But first it may be demanded, what the thing we speak of is, or what this facetiousness doth import; to which questio I might reply, as Democritus did to him that asked the definition o a man—'*tis that which we all see and know;* and one better apprehends what it is by acquaintance, than I can inform him b description. It is, indeed, a thing so versatile and multiform appearing in so many shapes, so many postures, so many garbs, s variously apprehended by several eyes and judgments, that it seemet no less hard to settle a clear and certain notice thereof, than to make a portrait of Proteus, or to define the figure of fleeting air. Sometimes it lieth in pat allusion to a known story, or in seasonabl application of a trivial saying, or in forging an apposite tale: sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from the ambiguity of their sense, or the affinity of their sound: sometimes i is wrapped in a dress of luminous expression; sometimes it lurket under an odd similitude. Sometimes it is lodged in a sly question, i a smart answer; in a quirkish reason; in a shrewd intimation; i cunningly diverting or cleverly restoring an objection: sometimes i is couched in a bold scheme of speech; in a tart irony; in a lust hyperbole; in a startling metaphor; in a plausible reconciling o contradictions, or in acute nonsense: sometimes a scenical representation of persons or things, a counterfeit speech, a mimical look o gesture passeth for it; sometimes an affected simplicity, sometimes presumptuous bluntness giveth it being: sometimes it riseth only fro a lucky hitting upon what is strange: sometimes from a craft wresting obvious matter to the purpose: often it consisteth in on knows not what, and springeth up one can hardly tell how. Its way are unaccountable and inexplicable, being answerable to the numberles rovings of fancy and windings of language. It is, in short, a manne of speaking out of the simple and plain way (such as reason teachet and knoweth things by), which by a pretty surprising uncouthness i conceit or expression doth affect and amuse the fancy, shewing in i some wonder, and breathing some delight thereto. It raiset admiration, as signifying a nimble sagacity of apprehension, a specia felicity of invention, a vivacity of spirit, and reach of wit more tha vulgar: it seeming to argue a rare quickness of parts, that one ca fetch in remote conceits applicable; a notable skill that he ca dextrously accommodate them to a purpose before him, together wit a lively briskness of humour, not apt to damp those sportful flashes o imagination. (Whence in Aristotle such persons are termed ἐπιδεξιοι, dexterous men and εὔτροποι, men of facile or versatile manners, who can easily turn themselves to all things, or turn all things to themselves.) It also procureth delight by gratifying curiosity with its rareness or semblance of difficulty (as monsters, not for their beauty but their rarity; as juggling tricks, not for their use but their abstruseness, are beheld with pleasure;) by diverting the mind from its road of serious thoughts; by instilling gaiety and airiness of spirit; by provoking to such dispositions of spirit, in way of emulation or complaisance, and by seasoning matter, otherwise distasteful or insipid, with an unusual and thence grateful tang.'—*Barrow's Works*, *Serm.* 14.

I will only add by way of general caution, that there is nothing more ridiculous than laughter without a cause, nor any thing more troublesome than what are called laughing people. A professed laugher is as contemptible and tiresome a character as a professed wit: the one is always contriving something to laugh at, the other is always laughing at nothing. An excess of levity is as impertinent as an excess of gravity. A character of this sort is well personified by Spenser, in the Damsel of the Idle Lake—

> '————Who did essay
> To laugh at shaking of the leavés light.'

Any one must be mainly ignorant or thoughtless, who is surprised at every thing he sees; or wonderfully conceited, who expects every thing to conform to his standard of propriety. Clowns and idiots laugh on all occasions; and the common failing of wishing to be thought satirical often runs through whole families in country places, to the great annoyance of their neighbours. To be struck with incongruity in whatever comes before us, does not argue great comprehension or refinement of perception, but rather a looseness and flippancy of mind and temper, which prevents the individual from connecting any two ideas steadily or consistently together. It is owing to a natural crudity and precipitateness of the imagination, which assimilates nothing properly to itself. People who are always laughing, at length laugh on the wrong side of their faces; for they cannot get others to laugh with them. In like manner, an affectation of wit by degrees hardens the heart, and spoils good company and good manners. A perpetual succession of good things puts an end to common conversation. There is no answer to a jest, but another; and even where the ball can be kept up in this way without ceasing, it tires the patience of the by-standers, and runs the speakers out of breath. Wit is the salt of conversation, not the food.

The four chief names for comic humour out of our own language are Aristophanes and Lucian among the ancients, Moliere and Rabelais among the moderns. Of the two first I shall say, for I know but little. I should have liked Aristophanes better, if he had treated Socrates less scurvily, for he has treated him most scurvily both as to wit and argument. His Plutus and his Birds are striking instances, the one of dry humour, the other of airy fancy.—Lucian is a writer who appears to deserve his full fame: he has the licentious and extravagant wit of Rabelais, but directed more uniformly to a purpose; and his comic productions are interspersed with beautiful and eloquent descriptions, full of sentiment, such as the exquisite account of the fable of the halcyon put into the mouth of Socrates, and the heroic eulogy on Bacchus, which is conceived in the highest strain of glowing panegyric.

The two other authors I proposed to mention are modern, and French. Moliere, however, in the spirit of his writings, is almost as much an English as a French author—quite a *barbare* in all in which he really excelled. He was unquestionably one of the greatest comic geniuses that ever lived; a man of infinite wit, gaiety, and invention—full of life, laughter, and whim. But it cannot be denied that his plays are in general mere farces, without scrupulous adherence to nature, refinement of character, or common probability. The plots of several of them could not be carried on for a moment without a perfect collusion between the parties to wink at contradictions and act in defiance of the evidence of their senses. For instance take the *Medecin malgrè lui* (the Mock Doctor), in which a common wood-cutter takes upon himself, and is made successfully to support through a whole play, the character of a learned physician, without exciting the least suspicion; and yet, notwithstanding the absurdity of the plot, it is one of the most laughable and truly comic productions that can well be imagined. The rest of his lighter pieces the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Monsieur Pourceaugnac*, *George Dandin*, (or Barnaby Brittle,) &c. are of the same description—gratuitous assumptions of character, and fanciful and outrageous caricatures of nature. He indulges at his peril in the utmost license of burlesque exaggeration; and gives a loose to the intoxication of his animal spirits. With respect to his two most laboured comedies, the Tartuffe and Misanthrope, I confess that I find them rather hard to get through; they have much of the improbability and extravagance of the others united with the endless common-place prosing of French declamation. What can exceed, for example, the absurdity of the Misanthrope who leaves his mistress, after every proof of her attachment and constancy, for no other reason than that she will not submit to the *technical formality* of going to live with him in a wilderness? Th characters, again, which Celimene gives of her female friends, near the opening of the play, are admirable satires, (as good as Pope's characters of women,) but not exactly in the spirit of comic dialogue. The strictures of Rousseau on this play, in his Letter to D'Alembert, are a fine specimen of the best philosophical criticism.—The same remarks apply in a greater degree to the Tartuffe. The long speeches and reasonings in this play tire one almost to death: they may be very good logic, or rhetoric, or philosophy, or any thing but comedy. If each of the parties had retained a special pleader to speak his sentiments, they could have appeared more verbose or intricate. The improbability of the character of Orgon is wonderful. This play is in one point of view invaluable, as a lasting monument of the credulity of the French to all verbal professions of wisdom or virtue; and its existence can only be accounted for from that astonishing and tyrannical predominance which words exercise over things in the mind of every Frenchman. The *Ecole des Femmes*, from which Wycherley has borrowed his Country Wife, with the true spirit of original genius, is, in my judgment, the masterpiece of Moliere. The set speeches in the original play, it is true, would not be borne on the English stage, nor indeed on the French, but that they are carried off by the verse. The *Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes*, the dialogue of which is prose, is written in a very different style. Among other things, this little piece contains an exquisite, and almost unanswerable defence of the superiority of comedy over tragedy. Moliere was to be excused for taking this side of the question.

A writer of some pretensions among ourselves has reproached the French with 'an equal want of books and men.' There is a common French print, in which Moliere is represented reading one of his plays in the presence of the celebrated Ninon de l'Enclos, to a circle of the wits and first men of his own time. Among these are the great Corneille; the tender, faultless Racine; Fontaine, the artless old man, unconscious of immortality; the accomplished St. Evremond; the Duke de la Rochefocault, the severe anatomiser of the human breast; Boileau, the flatterer of courts and judge of men! Were these men nothing? They have passed for men (and great ones) hitherto, and though the prejudice is an old one, I should hope it may still last our time.

Rabelais is another name that might have saved this unjust censure. The wise sayings and heroic deeds of Gargantua and Pantagruel ought not to be set down as nothing. I have already spoken my mind at large of this author; but I cannot help thinking of him here, sitting in his easy chair, with an eye languid with excess of mirth, his lip quivering with a new-born conceit, and wiping his beard after a well-seasoned jest, with his pen held carelessly in his hand, hi wine-flagons, and his books of law, of school divinity, and physic before him, which were his jest-books, whence he drew endles stores of absurdity; laughing at the world and enjoying it by turns and making the world laugh with him again, for the last three hundred years, at his teeming wit and its own prolific follies. Eve to those who have never read his works, the name of Rabelais is cordial to the spirits, and the mention of it cannot consist with gravit or spleen!

LECTURE II

ON SHAKSPEARE AND BEN JONSON

Dr. Johnson thought Shakspeare's comedies better than his tragedies and gives as a reason, that he was more at home in the one than in th other. That comedies should be written in a more easy and careles vein than tragedies, is but natural. This is only saying that a comed is not so serious a thing as a tragedy. But that he shewed a greate mastery in the one than the other, I cannot allow, nor is it generall felt. The labour which the Doctor thought it cost Shakspeare t write his tragedies, only shewed the labour which it cost the criti in reading them, that is, his general indisposition to sympathis heartily and spontaneously with works of high-wrought passion o imagination. There is not in any part of this author's writings th slightest trace of his having ever been 'smit with the love of sacre song,' except some passages in Pope. His habitually morbi temperament and saturnine turn of thought required that the strin should rather be relaxed than tightened, that the weight upon th mind should rather be taken off than have any thing added to it There was a sluggish moroseness about his moral constitution tha refused to be roused to any keen agony of thought, and that was no very safely to be trifled with in lighter matters, though this last wa allowed to pass off as the most pardonable offence against the gravit of his pretensions. It is in fact the established rule at present, i these cases, to speak highly of the Doctor's authority, and to dissen from almost every one of his critical decisions. For my own par I so far consider this preference given to the comic genius of th poet as erroneous and unfounded, that I should say that he is th only tragic poet in the world in the highest sense, as being on a pa with, and the same as Nature, in her greatest heights and depths action and suffering. There is but one who durst walk within that mighty circle, treading the utmost bound of nature and passion, shewing us the dread abyss of woe in all its ghastly shapes and colours, and laying open all the faculties of the human soul to act, to think, and suffer, in direst extremities; whereas I think, on the other hand, that in comedy, though his talents there too were as wonderful as they were delightful, yet that there were some before him, others on a level with him, and many close behind him. I cannot help thinking, for instance, that Moliere was as great, or a greater comic genius than Shakspeare, though assuredly I do not think that Racine was as great, or a greater tragic genius. I think that both Rabelais and Cervantes, the one in the power of ludicrous description, the other in the invention and perfect keeping of comic character, excelled Shakspeare; that is, they would have been greater men, if they had had equal power with him over the stronger passions. For my own reading, I like Vanbrugh's City Wives' Confederacy as well, or ('not to speak it profanely') better than the Merry Wives of Windsor, and Congreve's Way of the World as well as the Comedy of Errors or Love's Labour Lost. But I cannot say that I know of any tragedies in the world that make even a tolerable approach to Hamlet, or Lear, or Othello, or some others, either in the sum total of their effect, or in their complete distinctness from every thing else, by which they take not only unquestioned, but undivided possession of the mind, and form a class, a world by themselves, mingling with all our thoughts like a second being. Other tragedies tell for more or less, are good, bad, or indifferent, as they have more or less excellence of a kind common to them with others: but these stand alone by themselves; they have nothing common-place in them; they are a new power in the imagination, they tell for their whole amount, they measure from the ground. There is not only nothing so good (in my judgment) as Hamlet, or Lear, or Othello, or Macbeth, but there is nothing like Hamlet, or Lear, or Othello, or Macbeth. There is nothing, I believe, in the majestic Corneille, equal to the stern pride of Coriolanus, or which gives such an idea of the crumbling in pieces of the Roman grandeur, 'like an unsubstantial pageant faded,' as the Antony and Cleopatra. But to match the best serious comedies, such as Moliere's Misanthrope and his Tartuffe, we must go to Shakspeare's tragic characters, the Timon of Athens or honest Iago, when we shall more than succeed. He put his strength into his tragedies, and played with comedy. He was greatest in what was greatest; and his *forte* was not trifling, according to the opinion here combated, even though he might do that as well as any body else, unless he could do it better than any body else.—I would not be understood to say that there are no scenes or whole characters in Shakspeare equal in wit and droller to any thing upon record. Falstaff alone is an instance which, if would, I could not get over. 'He is the leviathan of all th creatures of the author's comic genius, and tumbles about his unwieldy bulk in an ocean of wit and humour.' But in general it wil be found (if I am not mistaken) that even in the very best of these the spirit of humanity and the fancy of the poet greatly prevail ove the mere wit and satire, and that we sympathise with his character oftener than we laugh at them. His ridicule wants the sting of ill nature. He had hardly such a thing as spleen in his composition Falstaff himself is so great a joke, rather from his being so huge mass of enjoyment than of absurdity. His re-appearance in th Merry Wives of Windsor is not 'a consummation devoutly to b wished,' for we do not take pleasure in the repeated triumphs ove him.—Mercutio's quips and banter upon his friends shew amazin gaiety, frankness, and volubility of tongue, but we think no more o them when the poet takes the words out of his mouth, and gives th description of Queen Mab. Touchstone, again, is a shrewd bitin fellow, a lively mischievous wag: but still what are his gibin sentences and chopped logic to the fine moralising vein of th fantastical Jacques, stretched beneath 'the shade of melanchol boughs?' Nothing. That is, Shakspeare was a greater poet tha wit: his imagination was the leading and master-quality of his min which was always ready to soar into its native element: the ludicrou was only secondary and subordinate. In the comedies of gallantr and intrigue, with what freshness and delight we come to the seriou and romantic parts! What a relief they are to the mind, after thos of mere ribaldry or mirth! Those in Twelfth Night, for instance and Much Ado about Nothing, where Olivia and Hero are concerned, throw even Malvolio and Sir Toby, and Benedick an Beatrice, into the shade. They 'give a very echo to the seat wher love is throned.' What he has said of music might be said of h own poetry—

> 'Oh! it came o'er the ear like the sweet south
> Breathing upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour.'

How poor, in general, what a falling-off, these parts seem in mer comic authors; how ashamed we are of them; and how fast w hurry the blank verse over, that we may get upon safe ground agair and recover our good opinion of the author! A striking an lamentable instance of this may be found (by any one who chooses) in the high-flown speeches in Sir Richard Steele's Conscious Lovers. —As good an example as any of this informing and redeeming power in our author's genius might be taken from the comic scenes in both parts of Henry IV. Nothing can go much lower in intellect or morals than many of the characters. Here are knaves and fools in abundance, of the meanest order, and stripped stark-naked. But genius, like charity, 'covers a multitude of sins:' we pity as much as we despise them; in spite of our disgust we like them, because they like themselves, and because we are made to sympathise with them; and the ligament, fine as it is, which links them to humanity, is never broken. Who would quarrel with Wart or Feeble, or Mouldy or Bull-calf, or even with Pistol, Nym, or Bardolph? None but a hypocrite. The severe censurers of the morals of imaginary characters can generally find a hole for their own vices to creep out at; and yet do not perceive how it is that the imperfect and even deformed characters in Shakspeare's plays, as done to the life, by forming a part of our personal consciousness, claim our personal forgiveness, and suspend or evade our moral judgment, by bribing our self-love to side with them. Not to do so, is not morality, but affectation, stupidity, or ill-nature. I have more sympathy with one of Shakspeare's pick-purses, Gadshill or Peto, than I can possibly have with any member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, and would by no means assist to deliver the one into the hands of the other. Those who cannot be persuaded to draw a veil over the foibles of ideal characters, may be suspected of wearing a mask over their own! Again, in point of understanding and attainments, Shallow sinks low enough; and yet his cousin Silence is a foil to him; he is the shadow of a shade, glimmers on the very verge of downright imbecility, and totters on the brink of nothing. 'He has been merry twice or once ere now,' and is hardly persuaded to break his silence in a song. Shallow has 'heard the chimes at midnight,' and roared out glees and catches at taverns and inns of court, when he was young. So, at least, he tells his cousin Silence, and Falstaff encourages the loftiness of his pretensions. Shallow would be thought a great man among his dependents and followers; Silence is nobody—not even in his own opinion: yet he sits in the orchard, and eats his carraways and pippins among the rest. Shakspeare takes up the meanest subjects with the same tenderness that we do an insect's wing, and would not kill a fly. To give a more particular instance of what I mean, I will take the inimitable and affecting, though most absurd and ludicrous dialogue, between Shallow and Silence, on the death of old Double.

'*Shallow.* Come on, come on, come on; give me your hand, Sir; giv me your hand, Sir; an early stirrer, by the rood. And how doth m good cousin Silence?

Silence. Good morrow, good cousin Shallow.

Shallow. And how doth my cousin, your bedfellow? and your faire daughter, and mine, my god-daughter Ellen?

Silence. Alas, a black ouzel, cousin Shallow.

Shallow. By yea and nay, Sir; I dare say, my cousin William is becom a good scholar: he is at Oxford still, is he not?

Silence. Indeed, Sir, to my cost.

Shallow. He must then to the Inns of Court shortly. I was once c Clement's-Inn; where, I think, they will talk of mad Shallow yet.

Silence. You were called lusty Shallow then, cousin.

Shallow. I was called any thing, and I would have done any thin indeed, and roundly too. There was I, and little John Doit of Staffor shire, and black George Bare, and Francis Pickbone, and Will Squele Cotswold man, you had not four such swinge-bucklers in all the In of Court again; and, I may say to you, we knew where the bona-rob were, and had the best of them all at commandment. Then was Jac Falstaff (now Sir John, a boy,) and page to Thomas Mowbray, Duk of Norfolk.

Silence. This Sir John, cousin, that comes hither anon about soldiers?

Shallow. The same Sir John, the very same: I saw him brea Schoggan's head at the court-gate, when he was a crack, not thus high and the very same day did I fight with one Sampson Stockfish, a fruitere behind Gray's-Inn. O, the mad days that I have spent! and to see ho many of mine old acquaintance are dead!

Silence. We shall all follow, cousin.

Shallow. Certain, 'tis certain, very sure, very sure: death (as th Psalmist saith) is certain to all, all shall die.—How a good yoke bullocks at Stamford fair?

Silence. Truly, cousin, I was not there.

Shallow. Death is certain. Is old Double of your town living yet?

Silence. Dead, Sir.

Shallow. Dead! see, see! he drew a good bow: and dead? he shot fine shoot. John of Gaunt loved him well, and betted much money o his head. Dead! he would have clapped i'th' clout at twelve score; an carried you a forehand shaft a fourteen and fourteen and a half, that would have done a man's heart good to see.—How a score of ewes now?

Silence. Thereafter as they be: a score of good ewes may be worth te pounds.

Shallow. And is old Double dead?'

There is not any thing more characteristic than this in all Shakspear A finer sermon on mortality was never preached. We see the fra condition of human life, and the weakness of the human understan ing in Shallow's reflections on it; who, while the past is slidin from beneath his feet, still clings to the present. The meane circumstances are shewn through an atmosphere of abstraction that dignifies them: their very insignificance makes them more affecting, for they instantly put a check on our aspiring thoughts, and remind us that, seen through that dim perspective, the difference between the great and little, the wise and foolish, is not much. 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin:' and old Double, though his exploits had been greater, could but have had his day. There is a pathetic *naiveté* mixed up with Shallow's common-place reflections and impertinent digressions. The reader laughs (as well he may) in reading the passage, but he lays down the book to think. The wit, however diverting, is social and humane. But this is not the distinguishing characteristic of wit, which is generally provoked by folly, and spends its venom upon vice.

The fault, then, of Shakspeare's comic Muse is, in my opinion, that it is too good-natured and magnanimous. It mounts above its quarry. It is 'apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes:' but it does not take the highest pleasure in making human nature look as mean, as ridiculous, and contemptible as possible. It is in this respect, chiefly, that it differs from the comedy of a later, and (what is called) a more refined period. Genteel comedy is the comedy of fashionable life, and of artificial character and manners. The most pungent ridicule, is that which is directed to mortify vanity, and to expose affectation; but vanity and affectation, in their most exorbitant and studied excesses, are the ruling principles of society, only in a highly advanced state of civilisation and manners. Man can hardly be said to be a truly contemptible animal, till, from the facilities of general intercourse, and the progress of example and opinion, he becomes the ape of the extravagances of other men. The keenest edge of satire is required to distinguish between the true and false pretensions to taste and elegance; its lash is laid on with the utmost severity, to drive before it the common herd of knaves and fools, not to lacerate and terrify the single stragglers. In a word, it is when folly is epidemic, and vice worn as a mark of distinction, that all the malice of wit and humour is called out and justified to detect the imposture, and prevent the contagion from spreading. The fools in Wycherley and Congreve are of their own, or one another's making, and deserve to be well scourged into common sense and decency: the fools in Shakspeare are of his own or nature's making; and it would be unfair to probe to the quick, or hold up to unqualified derision, the faults which are involuntary and incorrigible, or those which you yourself encourage and exaggerate, from the pleasure you take in witnessing them. Our later comic writers represent a state of manners, in which to be a man of wit and pleasure about town was become the fashion, and i which the swarms of egregious pretenders in both kinds openly kep one another in countenance, and were become a public nuisance Shakspeare, living in a state of greater rudeness and simplicity, chiefl gave certain characters which were a kind of *grotesques*, or solitar excrescences growing up out of their native soil without affectation and which he undertook kindly to pamper for the public entertainment. For instance, Sir Andrew Aguecheek is evidently a creatur of the poet's own fancy. The author lends occasion to his absurdit to shew itself as much as he pleases, devises antics for him whic would not enter into his own head, makes him 'go to church in galliard, and return home in a coranto;' adds fuel to his folly, o throws cold water on his courage; makes his puny extravagance venture out or slink into corners without asking his leave; encourage them into indiscreet luxuriance, or checks them in the bud, just as i suits him for the jest's sake. The gratification of the fancy, 'an furnishing matter for innocent mirth,' are, therefore, the chief objec of this and other characters like it, rather than reforming the mora sense, or indulging our personal spleen. But Tattle and Sparkish who are fops cast not in the mould of fancy, but of fashion, who hav a tribe of forerunners and followers, who catch certain diseases of th mind on purpose to communicate the infection, and are screened i their preposterous eccentricities by their own conceit and by th world's opinion, are entitled to no quarter, and receive none. The think themselves objects of envy and admiration, and on that accoun are doubly objects of our contempt and ridicule.—We find that th scenes of Shakspeare's comedies are mostly laid in the country, o are transferable there at pleasure. The genteel comedy exists onl in towns, and crowds of borrowed characters, who copy others as th satirist copies them, and who are only seen to be despised. 'A beyond Hyde Park is a desart to it:' while there the pastoral an poetic comedy begins to vegetate and flourish, unpruned, idle, an fantastic. It is hard to 'lay waste a country gentleman' in a state o nature, whose humours may have run a little wild or to seed, or t lay violent hands on a young booby 'squire, whose absurdities hav not yet arrived at years of discretion: but my Lord Foppington, wh is 'the prince of coxcombs,' and 'proud of being at the head of s prevailing a party,' deserves his fate. I am not for going so far as t pronounce Shakspeare's 'manners damnable, because he had not see the court;' but I think that comedy does not find its richest harve till individual infirmities have passed into general manners, and it the example of courts, chiefly, that stamps folly with credit an currency, or glosses over vice with meretricious lustre. I conceiv therefore, that the golden period of our comedy was just after the age of Charles II. when the town first became tainted with the affectation of the manners and conversation of fashionable life, and before the distinction between rusticity and elegance, art and nature, was lost (as it afterwards was) in a general diffusion of knowledge, and the reciprocal advantages of civil intercourse. It is to be remarked, that the union of the three gradations of artificial elegance and courtly accomplishments in one class, of the affectation of them in another, and of absolute rusticity in a third, forms the highest point of perfection of the comedies of this period, as we may see in Vanbrugh's Lord Foppington, Sir Tunbelly Clumsy, and Miss Hoyden; Lady Townly, Count Basset, and John Moody; in Congreve's Millamant, Lady Wishfort, Witwoud, Sir Wilful Witwoud, and the rest.

In another point of view, or with respect to that part of comedy which relates to gallantry and intrigue, the difference between Shakspeare's comic heroines and those of a later period may be referred to the same distinction between natural and artificial life, between the world of fancy and the world of fashion. The refinements of romantic passion arise out of the imagination brooding over 'airy nothing,' or over a favourite object, where 'love's golden shaft hath killed the flock of all affections else:' whereas the refinements of this passion in genteel comedy, or in every-day life, may be said to arise out of repeated observation and experience, diverting and frittering away the first impressions of things by a multiplicity of objects, and producing, not enthusiasm, but fastidiousness or giddy dissipation. For the one a comparatively rude age and strong feelings are best fitted; for 'there the mind must minister to itself:' to the other, the progress of society and a knowledge of the world are essential; for here the effect does not depend on leaving the mind concentred in itself, but on the wear and tear of the heart, amidst the complex and rapid movements of the artificial machinery of society, and on the arbitrary subjection of the natural course of the affections to every the slightest fluctuation of fashion, caprice, or opinion. Thus Olivia, in Twelfth Night, has but one admirer of equal rank with herself, and but one love, to whom she innocently plights her hand and heart; or if she had a thousand lovers, she would be the sole object of their adoration and burning vows, without a rival. The heroine of romance and poetry sits secluded in the bowers of fancy, sole queen and arbitress of all hearts; and as the character is one of imagination, 'of solitude and melancholy musing born,' so it may be best drawn from the imagination. Millamant, in the Way of the World, on the contrary, who is the fine lady or heroine of comedy, has so many lovers, that she surfeits on admiration, till it becomes indifferent to her; so many rivals, that she is forced put on a thousand airs of languid affectation to mortify and vex the more; so many offers, that she at last gives her hand to the man her heart, rather to escape the persecution of their addresses, and o of levity and disdain, than from any serious choice of her own. Th is a comic character; its essence consists in making light of thin from familiarity and use, and as it is formed by habit and outwa circumstances, so it requires actual observation, and an acquaintanc with the modes of artificial life, to describe it with the utmost possib grace and precision. Congreve, who had every other opportunit was but a young man when he wrote this character; and that mak the miracle the greater.

I do not, in short, consider comedy as exactly an affair of t heart or the imagination; and it is for this reason only that I thin Shakspeare's comedies deficient. I do not, however, wish to give preference of any comedies over his; but I do perceive a differenc between his comedies and some others that are, notwithstandin excellent in their way, and I have endeavoured to point out in wh this difference consists, as well as I could. Finally, I will not s that he had not as great a natural genius for comedy as any one; b I may venture to say, that he had not the same artificial models a regulated mass of fashionable absurdity or elegance to work upon.

The superiority of Shakspeare's natural genius for comedy cann be better shewn than by a comparison between his comic characte and those of Ben Jonson. The matter is the same: but ho different is the manner! The one gives fair-play to nature and h own genius, while the other trusts almost entirely to imitation a custom. Shakspeare takes his groundwork in individual charact and the manners of his age, and raises from them a fantastical a delightful superstructure of his own: the other takes the same groun work in matter-of-fact, but hardly ever rises above it; and the mo he strives, is but the more enveloped 'in the crust of formality' a the crude circumstantials of his subject. His genius (not to profa an old and still venerable name, but merely to make myself unde stood) resembles the grub more than the butterfly, plods and grove on, wants wings to wanton in the idle summer's air, and catch th golden light of poetry. Ben Jonson is a great borrower from t works of others, and a plagiarist even from nature; so little freedo is there in his imitations of her, and he appears to receive her bount like an alms. His works read like translations, from a certain cram manner, and want of adaptation. Shakspeare, even when he tak whole passages from books, does it with a spirit, felicity, and master over his subject, that instantly makes them his own; and shews mo independence of mind and original thinking in what he plunders without scruple, than Ben Jonson often did in his most studied passages, forced from the sweat and labour of his brain. His style is as dry, as literal, and meagre, as Shakspeare's is exuberant, liberal, and unrestrained. The one labours hard, lashes himself up, and produces little pleasure with all his fidelity and tenaciousness of purpose: the other, without putting himself to any trouble, or thinking about his success, performs wonders,—

> 'Does mad and fantastic execution,
> Engaging and redeeming of himself,
> With such a careless force and forceless[1] care,
> As if that luck, in very spite of cunning,
> Bade him win all.'

There are people who cannot taste olives—and I cannot much relish Ben Jonson, though I have taken some pains to do it, and went to the task with every sort of good will. I do not deny his power or his merit; far from it: but it is to me of a repulsive and unamiable kind. He was a great man in himself, but one cannot readily sympathise with him. His works, as the characteristic productions of an individual mind, or as records of the manners of a particular age, cannot be valued too highly; but they have little charm for the mere general reader. Schlegel observes, that whereas Shakspeare gives the springs of human nature, which are always the same, or sufficiently so to be interesting and intelligible; Jonson chiefly gives the *humours* of men, as connected with certain arbitrary or conventional modes of dress, action, and expression, which are intelligible only while they last, and not very interesting at any time. Shakspeare's characters are men; Ben Jonson's are more like machines, governed by mere routine, or by the convenience of the poet, whose property they are. In reading the one, we are let into the minds of his characters, we see the play of their thoughts, how their humours flow and work: the author takes a range over nature, and has an eye to every object or occasion that presents itself to set off and heighten the ludicrous character he is describing. His humour (so to speak) bubbles, sparkles, and finds its way in all directions, like a natural spring. In Ben Jonson it is, as it were, confined in a leaden cistern, where it stagnates and corrupts; or directed only through certain artificial pipes and conduits, to answer a given purpose. The comedy of this author is far from being 'lively, audible, and full of vent:' it is for the most part obtuse, obscure, forced, and tedious. He wears out a jest to the last shred and coarsest grain. His imagination fastens

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[1] Unforced.

instinctively on some one mark or sign by which he designates t
individual, and never lets it go, for fear of not meeting with any oth
means to express himself by. A cant phrase, an odd gesture, an o
fashioned regimental uniform, a wooden leg, a tobacco-box, or
hacked sword, are the standing topics by which he embodies h
characters to the imagination. They are cut and dried comedy; t
letter, not the spirit of wit and humour. Each of his characters h
a particular cue, a professional badge which he wears and is know
by, and by nothing else. Thus there is no end of Captain Otter, h
Bull, his Bear, and his Horse, which are no joke at first, and do n
become so by being repeated twenty times. It is a mere matter
fact, that some landlord of his acquaintance called his drinking cu
by these ridiculous names; but why need we be told so more tha
once, or indeed at all? There is almost a total want of variet
fancy, relief, and of those delightful transitions which abound, f
instance, in Shakspeare's tragi-comedy. In Ben Jonson, we fir
ourselves generally in low company, and we see no hope of getting o
of it. He is like a person who fastens upon a disagreeable subjec
and cannot be persuaded to leave it. His comedy, in a word, h
not what Shakspeare somewhere calls 'bless'd conditions.' It
cross-grained, mean, and mechanical. It is handicraft wit. Squali
poverty, sheer ignorance, bare-faced impudence, or idiot imbecilit
are his dramatic common-places—things that provoke pity or disgus
instead of laughter. His portraits are caricatures by dint of the
very likeness, being extravagant tautologies of themselves; as his plo
are improbable by an excess of consistency; for he goes thoroug
stitch with whatever he takes in hand, makes one contrivance answe
all purposes, and every obstacle give way to a predetermined theor
For instance, nothing can be more incredible than the mercenar
conduct of Corvino, in delivering up his wife to the palsied embrace
of Volpone; and yet the poet does not seem in the least to boggle
the incongruity of it: but the more it is in keeping with the absurdit
of the rest of the fable, and the more it advances it to an incredibl
catastrophe, the more he seems to dwell upon it with complacenc
and a sort of wilful exaggeration, as if it were a logical discovery
corollary from well-known premises. He would no more be baffle
in the working out a plot, than some people will be baffled in a
argument. 'If to be wise were to be obstinate,' our author migh
have laid signal claim to this title. Old Ben was of a scholasti
turn, and had dealt a little in the occult sciences and controversi
divinity. He was a man of strong crabbed sense, retentive memor
acute observation, great fidelity of description and keeping in characte
a power of working out an idea so as to make it painfully true an

oppressive, and with great honesty and manliness of feeling, as well as directness of understanding: but with all this, he wanted, to my thinking, that genial spirit of enjoyment and finer fancy, which constitute the essence of poetry and of wit. The sense of reality exercised a despotic sway over his mind, and equally weighed down and clogged his perception of the beautiful or the ridiculous. He had a keen sense of what was true and false, but not of the difference between the agreeable and disagreeable; or if he had, it was by his understanding rather than his imagination, by rule and method, not by sympathy, or intuitive perception of 'the gayest, happiest attitude of things.' There was nothing spontaneous, no impulse or ease about his genius: it was all forced, up-hill work, making a toil of a pleasure. And hence his overweening admiration of his own works, from the effort they had cost him, and the apprehension that they were not proportionably admired by others, who knew nothing of the pangs and throes of his Muse in child-bearing. In his satirical descriptions he seldom stops short of the lowest and most offensive point of meanness; and in his serious poetry he seems to repose with complacency only on the pedantic and far-fetched, the *ultima Thule* of his knowledge. He has a conscience of letting nothing escape the reader that he knows. *Aliquando sufflaminandus erat*, is as true of him as it was of Shakspeare, but in a quite different sense. He is doggedly bent upon fatiguing you with a favourite idea; whereas, Shakspeare overpowers and distracts attention by the throng and indiscriminate variety of his. His Sad Shepherd is a beautiful fragment. It was a favourite with the late Mr. Horne Tooke: indeed it is no wonder, for there was a sort of sympathy between the two men. Ben was like the modern wit and philosopher, a grammarian and a hard-headed thinker.—There is an amusing account of Ben Jonson's private manners in Howel's Letters, which is not generally known, and which I shall here extract.

'*From James Howel, Esq. to Sir Thomas Hawk, Kt.*

'Sir, *Westminster, 5th April*, 1636.

'I was invited yesternight to a solemn supper by B. J. where you were deeply remembered; there was good company, excellent cheer, choice wines, and jovial welcome: one thing intervened, which almost spoiled the relish of the rest, that B. began to engross all the discourse, to vapour extremely of himself, and, by vilifying others, to magnify his own Muse. T. Ca. (Tom Carew) buzzed me in the ear, that though Ben had barrelled up a great deal of knowledge, yet it seems he had not read the ethics, which, among other precepts of morality, forbid self-commendation, declaring it to be an ill-favoured solecism in good manners. It made me think upon the lady (not very young) who having a good while given her guests neat entertainment, a capon being brought upon the table, insteac of a spoon, she took a mouthful of claret, and spouted into the hollow bird such an accident happened in this entertainment: you know—*Propria lau sordet in ore*: be a man's breath ever so sweet, yet it makes one's praise stink, if he makes his own mouth the conduit-pipe of it. But for my par I am content to dispense with the Roman infirmity of Ben, now that tim hath snowed upon his pericranium. You know Ovid and (your) Horac were subject to this humour, the first bursting out into—

Jamque opus exegi, quod nec Jovis ira nec ignis, &c.

the other into—

Exegi monumentum ære perennius, &c.

As also Cicero, while he forced himself into this hexameter: *O fortunatam natam, me consule Romam!* There is another reason that excuseth B. whic is, that if one be allowed to love the natural issue of his body, why not tha of the brain, which is of a spiritual and more noble extraction?'

The concurring testimony of all his contemporaries agrees with hi own candid avowal, as to Ben Jonson's personal character. H begins, for instance, an epistle to Drayton in these words—

'Michael, by some 'tis doubted if I be
A friend at all; or if a friend, to thee.'

Of Shakspeare's comedies I have already given a detailed account which is before the public, and which I shall not repeat of course but I shall give a cursory sketch of the principal of Ben Jonson's.—The Silent Woman is built upon the supposition of an old citize disliking noise, who takes to wife Epicene (a supposed young lady) for the reputation of her silence, and with a view to disinherit hi nephew, who has laughed at his infirmity; when the ceremony is n sooner over than the bride turns out a very shrew, his house become a very Babel of noises, and he offers his nephew his own terms t unloose the matrimonial knot, which is done by proving that Epicen is no woman. There is some humour in the leading character, bu too much is made out of it, not in the way of Moliere's exaggerations, which, though extravagant, are fantastical and ludicrous, but o serious, plodding, minute prolixity. The first meeting betwee Morose and Epicene is well managed, and does not 'o'erstep th modesty of nature,' from the very restraint imposed by the situatio of the parties—by the affected taciturnity of the one, and th other's singular dislike of noise. The whole story, from th beginning to the end, is a gratuitous assumption, and the height o improbability. The author, in sustaining the weight of his plot, seems like a balance-master who supports a number of people, piled one upon another, on his hands, his knees, his shoulders, but with great effort on his own part, and with a painful effect to the beholders. The scene between Sir Amorous La Foole and Sir John Daw, in which they are frightened by a feigned report of each other's courage, into a submission to all sorts of indignities, which they construe into flattering civilities, is the same device as that in Twelfth Night between Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Viola, carried to a paradoxical and revolting excess. Ben Jonson had no idea of decorum in his dramatic fictions, which Milton says is the principal thing, but went on caricaturing himself and others till he could go no farther in extravagance, and sink no lower in meanness. The titles of his *dramatis personæ*, such as Sir Amorous La Foole, Truewit, Sir John Daw, Sir Politic Would-be, &c. &c. which are significant and knowing, shew his determination to overdo every thing by thus letting you into their characters beforehand, and afterwards proving their pretensions by their names. Thus Peregrine, in Volpone, says, 'Your name, Sir? *Politick.* My name is Politick Would-be.' To which Peregrine replies, 'Oh, that speaks him.' How it should, if it was his real name, and not a nick-name given him on purpose by the author, is hard to conceive. This play was Dryden's favourite. It is indeed full of sharp, biting sentences against the women, of which he was fond. The following may serve as a specimen. Truewit says, 'Did I not tell thee, Dauphine? Why, all their actions are governed by crude opinion, without reason or cause: they know not why they do any thing; but, as they are informed, believe, judge, praise, condemn, love, hate, and in emulation one of another, do all these things alike. Only they have a natural inclination sways 'em generally to the worst, when they are left to themselves.' This is a cynical sentence; and we may say of the rest of his opinions, that 'even though we should hold them to be true, yet it is slander to have them so set down.' The women in this play indeed justify the author's severity; they are altogether abominable. They have an utter want of principle and decency, and are equally without a sense of pleasure, taste, or elegance. Madame Haughty, Madame Centaur, and Madame Mavis, form the College, as it is here pedantically called. They are a sort of candidates for being upon the town, but cannot find seducers, and a sort of blue-stockings, before the invention of letters. Mistress Epicene, the silent gentlewoman, turns out not to be a woman at all; which is not a very pleasant *denouement* of the plot, and is itself an incident apparently taken from the blundering blindman's-buff conclusion of the Merry Wives of Windsor. What Shakspeare might introduce by an accident, and as a mere passing jest, Ben Jonson would set about building a whole play upon. The directions for making love given by Truewit, the author's favourite, discover great knowledge and shrewdness of observation, mixed with the acuteness of malice, and approach to the best style of comic dialogue. But I must refer to the play itself for them.

The Fox, or Volpone, is his best play. It is prolix and improbable, but intense and powerful. It is written *con amore*. It is made up of cheats and dupes, and the author is at home among them. He shews his hatred of the one and contempt for the other, and makes them set one another off to great advantage. There are several striking dramatic contrasts in this play, where the Fox lies *perdue* to watch his prey, where Mosca is the dextrous go-between outwitting his gulls, his employer, and himself, and where each of the gaping legacy-hunters, the lawyer, the merchant, and the miser, eagerly occupied with the ridiculousness of the other's pretensions, is blind only to the absurdity of his own: but the whole is worked up too mechanically, and our credulity overstretched at last revolts into scepticism, and our attention overtasked flags into drowsiness. This play seems formed on the model of Plautus, in unity of plot and interest; and old Ben, in emulating his classic model, appears to have done his best. There is the same caustic unsparing severity in it as in his other works. His patience is tried to the utmost. His words drop gall.

'Hood an ass with reverend purple,
So you can hide his too ambitious ears,
And he shall pass for a cathedral doctor.

The scene between Volpone, Mosca, Voltore, Corvino, and Corbaccio, at the outset, will shew the dramatic power in the conduct of this play, and will be my justification in what I have said of the literal tenaciousness (to a degree that is repulsive) of the author's imaginary descriptions.

Every Man in his Humour, is a play well-known to the public. This play acts better than it reads. The pathos in the principal character, Kitely, is 'as dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage.' There is, however, a certain good sense, discrimination, or logic of passion in the part, which affords excellent hints for an able actor, and which, if properly pointed, gives it considerable force on the stage. Bobadil is the only actually striking character in the play, and the real hero of the piece. His well-known proposal for the pacification of Europe, by killing some twenty of them, each his man a day, is as good as any other that has been suggested up to the present moment. His extravagant affectation, his blustering and cowardice, are an entertaining medley; and his final defeat and exposure, though exceedingly humorous, are the most affecting part of the story. Brain-worm is a particularly dry and abstruse character. We neither know his business nor his motives: his plots are as intricate as they are useless, and as the ignorance of those he imposes upon is wonderful. This is the impression in reading it. Yet from the bustle and activity of this character on the stage, the changes of dress, the variety of affected tones and gipsy jargon, and the limping affected gestures, it is a very amusing theatrical exhibition. The rest, Master Matthew, Master Stephen, Cob and Cob's wife, were living in the sixteenth century. That is all we all know of them. But from the very oddity of their appearance and behaviour, they have a very droll and even picturesque effect when acted. It seems a revival of the dead. We believe in their existence when we see them. As an example of the power of the stage in giving reality and interest to what otherwise would be without it, I might mention the scene in which Brain-worm praises Master Stephen's leg. The folly here is insipid from its being seemingly carried to an excess, till we see it; and then we laugh the more at it, the more incredible we thought it before.

Bartholomew Fair is chiefly remarkable for the exhibition of odd humours and tumbler's tricks, and is on that account amusing to read once.—The Alchymist is the most famous of this author's comedies, though I think it does not deserve its reputation. It contains all that is quaint, dreary, obsolete, and hopeless in this once-famed art, but not the golden dreams and splendid disappointments. We have the mere circumstantials of the sublime science, pots and kettles, aprons and bellows, crucibles and diagrams, all the refuse and rubbish, not the essence, the true *elixir vitæ*. There is, however, one glorious scene between Surly and Sir Epicure Mammon, which is the finest example I know of dramatic sophistry, or of an attempt to prove the existence of a thing by an imposing description of its effects; but compared with this, the rest of the play is a *caput mortuum*. The scene I allude to is the following:

'*Mammon*. Come on, Sir. Now, you set your foot on shore,
In *Novo Orbe*; here's the rich Peru:
And there within, Sir, are the golden mines,
Great Solomon's Ophir! He was sailing to 't
Three years, but we have reached it in ten months.
This is the day wherein, to all my friends,
I will pronounce the happy word, BE RICH;
This day you shall be Spectatissimi.
You shall no more deal with the hollow dye,
Or the frail card. * * * * * * * *

You shall start up young viceroys,
And have your punks and punketees, my Surly,
And unto thee, I speak it first, BE RICH.
Where is my Subtle, there? Within, ho!
Face. [*within*] Sir, he'll come to you, by and by.
Mam. That is his Firedrake,
His Lungs, his Zephyrus, he that puffs his coals,
Till he firk nature up in her own centre.
You are not faithful, Sir. This night I'll change
All that is metal in my house to gold:
And early in the morning, will I send
To all the plumbers and the pewterers
And buy their tin and lead up; and to Lothbury,
For all the copper.
Surly. What, and turn that too?
Mam. Yes, and I'll purchase Devonshire and Cornwall,
And make them perfect Indies! You admire now?
Surly. No, faith.
Mam. But when you see th' effects of the great medicine,
Of which one part projected on a hundred
Of Mercury, or Venus, or the Moon,
Shall turn it to as many of the Sun;
Nay, to a thousand, so *ad infinitum*;
You will believe me.
Surly. Yes, when I see't, I will—
Mam. Ha! why?
Do you think I fable with you? I assure you,
He that has once the flower of the Sun,
The perfect ruby, which we call Elixir,
Not only can do that, but, by its virtue,
Can confer honour, love, respect, long life;
Give safety, valour, yea, and victory,
To whom he will. In eight and twenty days,
I'll make an old man of fourscore, a child.
Surly. No doubt; he's that already.
Mam. Nay, I mean,
Restore his years, renew him, like an eagle,
To the fifth age; make him get sons and daughters,
Young giants; as our philosophers have done,
The ancient patriarchs, afore the flood,
But taking, once a week, on a knife's point,
The quantity of a grain of mustard of it;
Become stout Marses, and beget young Cupids.

* * * * * * * *

You are incredulous.
Surly. Faith, I have a humour,
I would not willingly be gull'd. Your stone
Cannot transmute me.
Mam. Pertinax Surly,

Will you believe antiquity? records?
I 'll shew you a book where Moses and his sister,
And Solomon have written of the art;
Ay, and a treatise penn'd by Adam—
Surly. How!
Mam. Of the philosopher's stone, and in High Dutch.
Surly. Did Adam write, Sir, in High Dutch?
Mam. He did;
Which proves it was the primitive tongue.

* * * * * * * *

[*Enter Face, as a servant.*
How now!
Do we succeed? Is our day come, and holds it?
Face. The evening will set red upon you, Sir:
You have colour for it, crimson; the red ferment
Has done his office: three hours hence prepare you
To see projection.
Mam. Pertinax, my Surly,
Again I say to thee, aloud, Be rich.
This day thou shalt have ingots; and to-morrow
Give lords the affront. * * * * Where 's thy master?
Face. At his prayers, Sir, he;
Good man, he 's doing his devotions
For the success.
Mam. Lungs, I will set a period
To all thy labours; thou shalt be the master
Of my seraglio . . .
For I do mean
To have a list of wives and concubines
Equal with Solomon: * * * *
I will have all my beds blown up, not stuft:
Down is too hard; and then, mine oval room
Fill'd with such pictures as Tiberius took
From Elephantis, and dull Aretine
But coldly imitated. Then, my glasses
Cut in more subtle angles, to disperse
And multiply the figures, as I walk. * * * My mists
I 'll have of perfume, vapoured about the room
To lose ourselves in; and my baths, like pits
To fall into: from whence we will come forth,
And roll us dry in gossamer and roses.
Is it arriv'd at ruby? Where I spy
A wealthy citizen, or a rich lawyer,
Have a sublimed pure wife, unto that fellow
I 'll send a thousand pound to be my cuckold.
Face. And I shall carry it?
Mam. No. I 'll have no bawds.
But fathers and mothers. They will do it best,
Best of all others. And my flatterers

Shall be the pure and gravest of divines
That I can get for money.
We will be brave, Puffe, now we have the medicine.
My meat shall all come in, in Indian shells,
Dishes of agat set in gold, and studded
With emeralds, sapphires, hyacinths, and rubies.
The tongues of carps, dormice, and camel's heels
Boil'd in the spirit of Sol, and dissolv'd pearl,
Apicius' diet, 'gainst the epilepsy;
And I will eat these broths with spoons of amber,
Headed with diamond and carbuncle.
My footboys shall eat pheasants, calver'd salmons,
Knots, godwits, lampreys; I myself will have
The beards of barbels serv'd instead of salads;
Oil'd mushrooms; and the swelling unctuous paps
Of a fat pregnant sow, newly cut off,
Drest with an exquisite and poignant sauce;
For which I'll say unto my cook, *There's gold,*
Go forth, and be a knight.
  Face. Sir, I'll go look
A little, how it heightens.
  Mam. Do. My shirts
I'll have of taffeta-sarsnet, soft and light,
As cobwebs; and for all my other raiment,
It shall be such as might provoke the Persian,
Were he to teach the world riot anew.
My gloves of fishes and birds' skins, perfum'd
With gums of Paradise and eastern air.
  Surly. And do you think to have the stone with this?
  Mam. No, I do think t' have all this with the stone.
  Surly. Why, I have heard, he must be *homo frugi,*
A pious, holy, and religious man,
One free from mortal sin, a very virgin.
  Mam. That makes it, Sir, he is so; but I buy it.
My venture brings it me. He, honest wretch,
A notable, superstitious, good soul,
Has worn his knees bare, and his slippers bald,
With prayer and fasting for it, and, Sir, let him
Do it alone, for me, still; here he comes;
Not a profane word afore him: 'tis poison.'

Act II. *scene* I.

I have only to add a few words on Beaumont and Fletcher. Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, the Chances, and the Wild Goose Chase, the original of the Inconstant, are superior in style and execution to any thing of Ben Jonson's. They are, indeed, some of the best comedies on the stage; and one proof that they are so, is, that they still hold possession of it. They shew the utmost alacrity of invention in contriving ludicrous distresses, and the utmost spirit in bearing up against, or impatience and irritation under them. Don John, in the Chances, is the heroic in comedy. Leon, in Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, is a fine exhibition of the born gentleman and natural fool: the Copper Captain is sterling to this hour: his mistress, Estifania, only died the other day with Mrs. Jordan: and the two grotesque females, in the same play, act better than the Witches in Macbeth.

LECTURE III

ON COWLEY, BUTLER, SUCKLING, ETHEREGE, &C.

The metaphysical poets or wits of the age of James and Charles I. whose style was adopted and carried to a more dazzling and fantastic excess by Cowley in the following reign, after which it declined, and gave place almost entirely to the poetry of observation and reasoning, are thus happily characterised by Dr. Johnson.

'The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour: but unluckily resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry, they only wrote verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; for the modulation was so imperfect, that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables.

'If the father of criticism has rightly denominated poetry τέχνη μιμητικὴ, *an imitative art*, these writers will, without great wrong, lose their right to the name of poets, for they cannot be said to have imitated any thing; they neither copied nature nor life; neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of intellect.'

The whole of the account is well worth reading: it was a subject for which Dr. Johnson's powers both of thought and expression were better fitted than any other man's. If he had had the same capacity for following the flights of a truly poetic imagination, or for feeling the finer touches of nature, that he had felicity and force in detecting and exposing the aberrations from the broad and beaten path of propriety and common sense, he would have amply deserved the reputation he has acquired as a philosophical critic.

The writers here referred to (such as Donne, Davies, Crashaw, and others) not merely mistook learning for poetry—they thought any thing was poetry that differed from ordinary prose and the natural impression of things, by being intricate, far-fetched, and improbable. Their style was not so properly learned as metaphysical;

that is to say, whenever, by any violence done to their ideas, they could make out an abstract likeness or possible ground of comparison, they forced the image, whether learned or vulgar, into the service of the Muses. Any thing would do to 'hitch into a rhyme,' no matter whether striking or agreeable, or not, so that it would puzzle the reader to discover the meaning, and if there was the most remote circumstance, however trifling or vague, for the pretended comparison to hinge upon. They brought ideas together not the most, but the least like; and of which the collision produced not light, but obscurity—served not to strengthen, but to confound. Their mystical verses read like riddles or an allegory. They neither belong to the class of lively or severe poetry. They have not the force of the one, nor the gaiety of the other; but are an ill-assorted, unprofitable union of the two together, applying to serious subjects that quaint and partial style of allusion which fits only what is light and ludicrous, and building the most laboured conclusions on the most fantastical and slender premises. The object of the poetry of imagination is to raise or adorn one idea by another more striking or more beautiful: the object of these writers was to match any one idea with any other idea, *for better for worse*, as we say, and whether any thing was gained by the change of condition or not. The object of the poetry of the passions again is to illustrate any strong feeling, by shewing the same feeling as connected with objects or circumstances more palpable and touching; but here the object was to strain and distort the immediate feeling into some barely possible consequence or recondite analogy, in which it required the utmost stretch of misapplied ingenuity to trace the smallest connection with the original impression. In short, the poetry of this period was strictly the poetry not of ideas, but of *definitions*: it proceeded in mode and figure, by *genus* and specific difference; and was the logic of the schools, or an oblique and forced construction of dry, literal matter-of-fact, decked out in a robe of glittering conceits, and clogged with the halting shackles of verse. The imagination of the writers, instead of being conversant with the face of nature, or the secrets of the heart, was lost in the labyrinths of intellectual abstraction, or entangled in the technical quibbles and impertinent intricacies of language. The complaint so often made, and here repeated, is not of the want of power in these men, but of the waste of it; not of the absence of genius, but the abuse of it. They had (many of them) great talents committed to their trust, richness of thought, and depth of feeling; but they chose to hide them (as much as they possibly could) under a false shew of learning and unmeaning subtlety. From the style which they had systematically adopted, they thought nothing done till they had perverted simplicity into affectation, and spoiled nature by art. They seemed to think there was an irreconcileable opposition between genius, as well as grace, and nature; tried to do without, or else constantly to thwart her; left nothing to her outward 'impress,' or spontaneous impulses, but made a point of twisting and torturing almost every subject they took in hand, till they had fitted it to the mould of their self-opinion and the previous fabrications of their own fancy, like those who pen acrostics in the shape of pyramids, and cut out trees into the shape of peacocks. Their chief aim is to make you wonder at the writer, not to interest you in the subject; and by an incessant craving after admiration, they have lost what they might have gained with less extravagance and affectation. So Cowper, who was of a quite opposite school, speaks feelingly of the misapplication of Cowley's poetical genius.

'And though reclaim'd by modern lights
From an erroneous taste,
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools.'

Donne, who was considerably before Cowley, is without his fancy, but was more recondite in his logic, and rigid in his descriptions. He is hence led, particularly in his satires, to tell disagreeable truths in as disagreeable a way as possible, or to convey a pleasing and affecting thought (of which there are many to be found in his other writings) by the harshest means, and with the most painful effort. His Muse suffers continual pangs and throes. His thoughts are delivered by the Cæsarean operation. The sentiments, profound and tender as they often are, are stifled in the expression; and 'heaved pantingly forth,' are 'buried quick again' under the ruins and rubbish of analytical distinctions. It is like poetry waking from a trance: with an eye bent idly on the outward world, and half-forgotten feelings crowding about the heart; with vivid impressions, dim notions, and disjointed words. The following may serve as instances of beautiful or impassioned reflections losing themselves in obscure and difficult applications. He has some lines to a Blossom, which begin thus:

'Little think'st thou, poor flow'r,
Whom I have watched six or seven days,
And seen thy birth, and seen what every hour
Gave to thy growth, thee to this height to raise,
And now dost laugh and triumph on this bough.
        Little think'st thou
That it will freeze anon, and that I shall
To-morrow find thee fall'n, or not at all.'

This simple and delicate description is only introduced as a foundation for an elaborate metaphysical conceit as a parallel to it, in th next stanza.

> 'Little think'st thou (poor heart
> That labour'st yet to nestle thee,
> And think'st by hovering here to get a part
> In a forbidden or forbidding tree,
> And hop'st her stiffness by long siege to bow :)
> Little think'st thou,
> That thou to-morrow, ere the sun doth wake,
> Must with this sun and me a journey take.'

This is but a lame and impotent conclusion from so delightful beginning.—He thus notices the circumstance of his wearing hi late wife's hair about his arm, in a little poem which is called th Funeral :

> 'Whoever comes to shroud me, do not harm
> Nor question much
> That subtle wreath of hair, about mine arm ;
> The mystery, the sign you must not touch.'

The scholastic reason he gives quite dissolves the charm of tende and touching grace in the sentiment itself—

> 'For 'tis my outward soul,
> Viceroy to that, which unto heaven being gone,
> Will leave this to control,
> And keep these limbs, her provinces, from dissolution.'

Again, the following lines, the title of which is Love's Deity, ar highly characteristic of this author's manner, in which the though are inlaid in a costly but imperfect mosaic-work.

> '*I long to talk with some old lover's ghost,*
> *Who died before the God of Love was born :*
> I cannot think that he, who then lov'd most,
> Sunk so low, as to love one which did scorn.
> But since this God produc'd a destiny,
> And that vice-nature, custom, lets it be ;
> I must love her that loves not me.'

The stanza in the Epithalamion on a Count Palatine of the Rhin has been often quoted against him, and is an almost irresistib illustration of the extravagances to which this kind of writin which turns upon a pivot of words and possible allusions, is liabl

Speaking of the bride and bridegroom he says, by way of serious compliment—

> 'Here lies a she-Sun, and a he-Moon there,
> She gives the best light to his sphere;
> Or each is both and all, and so
> They unto one another nothing owe.'

His love-verses and epistles to his friends give the most favourable idea of Donne. His satires are too clerical. He shews, if I may so speak, too much disgust, and, at the same time, too much contempt for vice. His dogmatical invectives hardly redeem the nauseousness of his descriptions, and compromise the imagination of his readers more than they assist their reason. The satirist does not write with the same authority as the divine, and should use his poetical privileges more sparingly. 'To the pure all things are pure,' is a maxim which a man like Dr. Donne may be justified in applying to himself; but he might have recollected that it could not be construed to extend to the generality of his readers, *without benefit of clergy*.

Bishop Hall's Satires are coarse railing in verse, and hardly that. Pope has, however, contrived to avail himself of them in some of his imitations.

Sir John Davies is the author of a poem on the Soul, and of one on Dancing. In both he shews great ingenuity, and sometimes terseness and vigour. In the last of these two poems his fancy *pirouettes* in a very lively and agreeable manner, but something too much in the style of a French opera-dancer, with sharp angular turns, and repeated deviations from the faultless line of simplicity and nature.

Crashaw was a writer of the same ambitious stamp, whose imagination was rendered still more inflammable by the fervors of fanaticism, and who having been converted from Protestantism to Popery (a weakness to which the 'seething brains' of the poets of this period were prone) by some visionary appearance of the Virgin Mary, poured out his devout raptures and zealous enthusiasm in a torrent of poetical hyperboles. The celebrated Latin Epigram on the miracle of our Saviour, 'The water blushed into wine,' is in his usual *hectic* manner. His translation of the contest between the Musician and the Nightingale is the best specimen of his powers.

Davenant's Gondibert is a tissue of stanzas, all aiming to be wise and witty, each containing something in itself, and the whole together amounting to nothing. The thoughts separately require so much attention to understand them, and arise so little out of the narrative, that they with difficulty sink into the mind, and have no commo feeling of interest to recal or link them together afterwards. Th general style may be judged of by these two memorable lines in th description of the skeleton-chamber.

'Yet on that wall hangs he too, who so thought,
And she dried by him whom that he obeyed.'

Mr. Hobbes, in a prefatory discourse, has thrown away a good dea of powerful logic and criticism in recommendation of the plan of hi friend's poem. Davenant, who was poet-laureate to Charles II. wrot several masques and plays which were well received in his time, bu have not come down with equal applause to us.

Marvel (on whom I have already bestowed such praise as I could for elegance and tenderness in his descriptive poems) in his satire and witty pieces was addicted to the affected and involved style her reprobated, as in his Flecknoe (the origin of Dryden's Macflecknoe and in his satire on the Dutch. As an instance of this forced, fa fetched method of treating his subject, he says, in ridicule of th Hollanders, that when their dykes overflowed, the fish used to com to table with them,

'And sat not as a meat, but as a guest.'

There is a poem of Marvel's on the death of King Charles I. whic I have not seen, but which I have heard praised by one whose prais is never high but of the highest things, for the beauty and pathos, a well as generous frankness of the sentiments, coming, as they dic from a determined and incorruptible political foe.

Shadwell was a successful and voluminous dramatic writer of muc the same period. His Libertine (taken from the celebrated Spanis story) is full of spirit; but it is the spirit of licentiousness an impiety. At no time do there appear to have been such extrem speculations afloat on the subject of religion and morality, as ther were shortly after the Reformation, and afterwards under the Stuart the differences being widened by political irritation; and the Purita often over-acting one extreme out of grimace and hypocrisy, as t king's party did the other out of *bravado*.

Carew is excluded from his pretensions to the laureateship Suckling's Sessions of the Poets, on account of his slowness. H verses are delicate and pleasing, with a certain feebleness, but wit very little tincture of the affectation of this period. His masq (called *Cælum Britannicum*) in celebration of a marriage at cour has not much wit nor fancy, but the accompanying prose directio and commentary on the mythological story, are written wi wonderful facility and elegance, in a style of familiar dramatic dialogue approaching nearer the writers of Queen Anne's reign than those of Queen Elizabeth's.

Milton's name is included by Dr. Johnson in the list of metaphysical poets on no better authority than his lines on Hobson the Cambridge Carrier, which he acknowledges were the only ones Milton wrote on this model. Indeed, he is the great contrast to that style of poetry, being remarkable for breadth and massiness, or what Dr. Johnson calls 'aggregation of ideas,' beyond almost any other poet. He has in this respect been compared to Michael Angelo, but not with much reason: his verses are

——'inimitable on earth
By model, or by shading pencil drawn.'

Suckling is also ranked, without sufficient warrant, among the metaphysical poets. Sir John was of 'the court, courtly;' and his style almost entirely free from the charge of pedantry and affectation. There are a few blemishes of this kind in his works, but they are but few. His compositions are almost all of them short and lively effusions of wit and gallantry, written in a familiar but spirited style, without much design or effort. His shrewd and taunting address to a desponding lover will sufficiently vouch for the truth of this account of the general cast of his best pieces.

'Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
Pr'ythee why so pale?
Will, when looking well can't move her,
Looking ill prevail?
Pr'ythee why so pale?

Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
Pr'ythee why so mute?
Will, when speaking well, can't win her,
Saying nothing do't?
Pr'ythee why so mute?

Quit, quit for shame, this will not move,
This cannot take her;
If of herself she will not love,
Nothing can make her;
The Devil take her.'

The two short poems against Fruition, that beginning, 'There never yet was woman made, nor shall, but to be curst,'—the song, 'I pr'ythee, spare me, gentle boy, press me no more for that slight toy, that foolish trifle of a heart,'—another, ''Tis now, since I sat

down before, that foolish fort, a heart,'—*Lutea Alanson*—the set
similes, 'Hast thou seen the down in the air, when wanton win
have tost it,'—and his 'Dream,' which is of a more tender an
romantic cast, are all exquisite in their way. They are the origi
of the style of Prior and Gay in their short fugitive verses, and
the songs in the Beggar's Opera. His Ballad on a Wedding is h
masterpiece, and is indeed unrivalled in that class of compositio
for the voluptuous delicacy of the sentiments, and the luxuria
richness of the images. I wish I could repeat the whole, but tha
from the change of manners, is impossible. The description of th
bride is (half of it) as follows: the story is supposed to be told b
one countryman to another:—

'Her finger was so small, the ring
Would not stay on, which they did bring;
It was too wide a peck:
And to say truth (for out it must)
It look'd like the great collar (just)
About our young colt's neck.

Her feet beneath her petticoat,
Like little mice, stole in and out,
As if they fear'd the light:
But oh! she dances such a way!
No sun upon an Easter-day
Is half so fine a sight.

* * * * * *

Her cheeks so rare a white was on,
No daisy makes comparison,
(Who sees them is undone)
For streaks of red were mingled there,
Such as are on a Cath'rine pear,
(The side that 's next the sun.)

Her lips were red; and one was thin,
Compar'd to that was next her chin;
(Some bee had stung it newly)
But (Dick) her eyes so guard her face,
I durst no more upon them gaze,
Than on the sun in July.

Her mouth so small, when she does speak,
Thoud'st swear her teeth her words did break,
That they might passage get;
But she so handled still the matter,
They came as good as ours, or better,
And are not spent a whit.'

There is to me in the whole of this delightful performance a freshness and purity like the first breath of morning. Its sportive irony never trespasses on modesty, though it sometimes (laughing) threatens to do so! Suckling's Letters are full of habitual gaiety and good sense. His Discourse on Reason in Religion is well enough meant. Though he excelled in the conversational style of poetry, writing verse with the freedom and readiness, vivacity and unconcern, with which he would have talked on the most familiar and sprightly topics, his peculiar powers deserted him in attempting dramatic dialogue. His comedy of the *Goblins* is equally defective in plot, wit, and nature; it is a wretched list of *exits* and *entrances*, and the whole business of the scene is taken up in the unaccountable seizure, and equally unaccountable escapes, of a number of persons from a band of robbers in the shape of goblins, who turn out to be noblemen and gentlemen in disguise. Suckling was not a Grub-street author; or it might be said, that this play is like what he might have written after dreaming all night of duns and a spunging-house. His tragedies are no better: their titles are the most interesting part of them, Aglaura, Brennoralt, and the Sad One.

Cowley had more brilliancy of fancy and ingenuity of thought than Donne, with less pathos and sentiment. His mode of illustrating his ideas differs also from Donne's in this: that whereas Donne is contented to analyse an image into its component elements, and resolve it into its most abstracted species; Cowley first does this, indeed, but does not stop till he has fixed upon some other prominent example of the same general class of ideas, and forced them into a metaphorical union, by the medium of the generic definition. Thus he says—

> 'The Phœnix Pindar is a vast species alone.'

He means to say that he stands by himself: he is then 'a vast species alone:' then by applying to this generality the *principium individuationis*, he becomes a Phœnix, because the Phœnix is the only example of a species contained in an individual. Yet this is only a literal or metaphysical coincidence: and literally and metaphysically speaking, Pindar was not a species by himself, but only seemed so by pre-eminence or excellence; that is, from qualities of mind appealing to and absorbing the imagination, and which, therefore, ought to be represented in poetical language, by some other obvious and palpable image exhibiting the same kind or degree of excellence in other things, as when Gray compares him to the Theban eagle,

> 'Sailing with supreme dominion
> Through the azure deep of air.'

Again, he talks in the Motto, or Invocation to his Muse, o 'marching the Muse's Hannibal' into undiscovered regions. Tha is, he thinks first of being a leader in poetry, and then he immediately, by virtue of this abstraction, becomes a Hannibal; thoug no two things can really be more unlike in all the associations belonging to them, than a leader of armies and a leader of the tunefu Nine. In like manner, he compares Bacon to Moses; for in *hi* verses extremes are sure to meet. The Hymn to Light, whic forms a perfect contrast to Milton's Invocation to Light, in th commencement of the third book of Paradise Lost, begins in th following manner:—

'First-born of Chaos, who so fair didst come
    From the old negro's darksome womb!
    Which, when it saw the lovely child,
The melancholy mass put on kind looks, and smil'd.'

* * * * * * * *

And soon after—

''Tis, I believe, this archery to show
    That so much cost in colours thou,
    And skill in painting, dost bestow,
Upon thy ancient arms, the gaudy heav'nly bow

Swift as light thoughts their empty career run,
    Thy race is finish'd when begun;
    Let a post-angel start with thee,
And thou the goal of earth shalt reach as soon as he.'

The conceits here are neither wit nor poetry; but a burlesque upo both, made up of a singular metaphorical jargon, verbal generalities and physical analogies. Thus his calling Chaos, or Darkness, 'th old negro,' would do for abuse or jest, but is too remote an degrading for serious poetry, and yet it is meant for such. Th 'old negro' is at best a nickname, and the smile on its face lose its beauty in such company. The making out the rainbow to be species of heraldic painting, and converting an angel into a post-boy shew the same rage for comparison; but such comparisons are a odious as they are unjust. Dr. Johnson has multiplied instances c the same false style, in its various divisions and subdivisions.[1] O Cowley's serious poems, the Complaint is the one I like the best and some of his translations in the Essays, as those on Liberty an Retirement, are exceedingly good. The Odes to Vandyke, to th Royal Society, to Hobbes, and to the latter Brutus, beginnin

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[1] See his Lives of the British Poets, Vol. I.

'Excellent Brutus,' are all full of ingenious and high thoughts, impaired by a load of ornament and quaint disguises. The Chronicle, or list of his Mistresses, is the best of his original lighter pieces: but the best of his poems are the translations from Anacreon, which remain, and are likely to remain unrivalled. The spirit of wine and joy circulates in them; and though they are lengthened out beyond the originals, it is by fresh impulses of an eager and inexhaustible feeling of delight. Here are some of them:—

DRINKING

'The thirsty earth soaks up the rain,
And drinks, and gapes for drink again.
The plants suck in the earth, and are
With constant drinking fresh and fair.
The sea itself, which one would think
Should have but little need of drink,
Drinks twice ten thousand rivers up,
So fill'd that they o'erflow the cup.
The busy sun (and one would guess
By 's drunken fiery face no less)
Drinks up the sea, and, when he 'as done,
The moon and stars drink up the sun.
They drink and dance by their own light,
They drink and revel all the night.
Nothing in nature 's sober found,
But an eternal health goes round.
Fill up the bowl then, fill it high,
Fill all the glasses there; for why
Should every creature drink but I;
Why, man of morals, tell me why?'

This is a classical intoxication; and the poet's imagination, giddy with fancied joys, communicates its spirit and its motion to inanimate things, and makes all nature reel round with it. It is not easy to decide between these choice pieces, which may be reckoned among the *delights of human kind*; but that to the Grasshopper is one of the happiest as well as most serious:—

'Happy insect, what can be
In happiness compar'd to thee?
Fed with nourishment divine,
The dewy morning's gentle wine!
Nature waits upon thee still,
And thy verdant cup does fill;
'Tis filled wherever thou dost tread,
Nature's self thy Ganymede.
Thou dost drink, and dance, and sing;
Happier than the happiest king!

All the fields which thou dost see,
All the plants, belong to thee;
All that summer-hours produce,
Fertile made with early juice.
Man for thee does sow and plough,
Farmer he, and landlord thou!
Thou dost innocently joy;
Nor does thy luxury destroy;
The shepherd gladly heareth thee,
More harmonious than he.
Thee country hinds with gladness hear,
Prophet of the ripen'd year!
Thee Phœbus loves, and does inspire;
Phœbus is himself thy sire.
To thee, of all things upon earth,
Life is no longer than thy mirth.
Happy insect, happy thou!
Dost neither age nor winter know;
But, when thou'st drunk, and danc'd, and sung
Thy fill, the flowery leaves among,
(Voluptuous and wise withal,
Epicurean animal!)
Sated with thy summer feast,
Thou retir'st to endless rest.'

Cowley's Essays are among the most agreeable prose-compositions in our language, being equally recommended by sense, wit, learning, and interesting personal history, and written in a style quite free from the faults of his poetry. It is a pity that he did not cultivate his talent for prose more, and write less in verse, for he was clearly a man of more reflection than imagination. The Essays on Agriculture, on Liberty, on Solitude, and on Greatness, are all of them delightful. From the last I may give his account of Senecio as an addition to the instances of the ludicrous, which I have attempted to enumerate in the introductory Lecture; whose ridiculous affectation of grandeur Seneca the elder (he tells us) describes to this effect: 'Senecio was a man of a turbid and confused wit, who could not endure to speak any but mighty words and sentences, till this humour grew at last into so notorious a habit, or rather disease, as became the sport of the whole town: he would have no servants, but huge, massy fellows; no plate or household stuff, but thrice as big as the fashion: you may believe me, for I speak it without raillery, his extravagancy came at last into such a madness, that he would not put on a pair of shoes, each of which was not big enough for both his feet: he would eat nothing but what was great, nor touch any fruit but horse-plums and pound-pears: he kept a mistress that was a very giantess, and made her walk too always in chiopins, till, at last, he got the surname of Senecio Grandio.' This was certainly the most absurd person we read of in antiquity. Cowley's character of Oliver Cromwell, which is intended as a satire, (though it certainly produces a very different impression on the mind) may vie for truth of outline and force of colouring with the masterpieces of the Greek and Latin historians. It may serve as a contrast to the last extract. 'What can be more extraordinary, than that a person of mean birth, no fortune, no eminent qualities of body, which have sometimes, or of mind, which have often, raised men to the highest dignities, should have the courage to attempt, and the happiness to succeed in, so improbable a design, as the destruction of one of the most ancient and most solidly-founded monarchies upon the earth? That he should have the power or boldness to put his prince and master to an open and infamous death; to banish that numerous and strongly-allied family; to do all this under the name and wages of a Parliament; to trample upon them too as he pleased, and spurn them out of doors when he grew weary of them; to raise up a new and unheard-of monster out of their ashes; to stifle that in the very infancy, and set up himself above all things that ever were called sovereign in England; to oppress all his enemies by arms, and all his friends afterwards by artifice; to serve all parties patiently for a while, and to command them victoriously at last; to over-run each corner of the three nations, and overcome with equal facility both the riches of the south and the poverty of the north; to be feared and courted by all foreign princes, and adopted a brother to the gods of the earth; to call together Parliaments with a word of his pen, and scatter them again with the breath of his mouth; to be humbly and daily petitioned that he would please to be hired, at the rate of two millions a-year, to be the master of those who had hired him before to be their servant; to have the estates and lives of three kingdoms as much at his disposal, as was the little inheritance of his father, and to be as noble and liberal in the spending of them; and lastly, (for there is no end of all the particulars of his glory) to bequeath all this with one word to his posterity; to die with peace at home, and triumph abroad; to be buried among kings, and with more than regal solemnity; and to leave a name behind him, not to be extinguished, but with the whole world; which as it is now too little for his praises, so might have been too for his conquests, if the short line of his human life could have been stretched out to the extent of his immortal designs!'

Cowley has left one comedy, called Cutter of Coleman Street, which met with an unfavourable reception at the time, and is now (not undeservedly) forgotten. It contains, however, one good scene which is rich both in fancy and humour, that between the puritanica bride, Tabitha, and her ranting royalist husband. It is said that this play was originally composed, and afterwards revived, as a satire upon the Presbyterian party; yet it was resented by the court party as a satire upon itself. A man must, indeed, be sufficiently blind with party-prejudice, to have considered this as a compliment to his own side of the question. 'Call you this backing of your friends?' The cavaliers are in this piece represented as reduced to the lowest shifts in point of fortune, and sunk still lower in point of principle.

The greatest single production of wit of this period, I might say of this country, is Butler's Hudibras. It contains specimens of every variety of drollery and satire, and those specimens crowded together into almost every page. The proof of this is, that nearly one half of his lines are got by heart, and quoted for mottos. In giving instances of different sorts of wit, or trying to recollect good things of this kind, they are the first which stand ready in the memory; and they are those which furnish the best tests and most striking illustrations of what we want. Dr. Campbell, in his Philosophy of Rhetoric, when treating of the subject of wit, which he has done very neatly and sensibly, has constant recourse to two authors, Pope and Butler, the one for ornament, the other more for use. Butler is equally in the hands of the learned and the vulgar; for the sense is generally as solid, as the images are amusing and grotesque. Whigs and Tories join in his praise. He could not, in spite of himself,

——'narrow his mind,
'And to party give up what was meant for mankind.'

Though his subject was local and temporary, his fame was not circumscribed within his own age. He was admired by Charles II. and has been rewarded by posterity. It is the poet's fate! It is not, perhaps, to be wondered at, that arbitrary and worthless monarchs like Charles II. should neglect those who pay court to them. The idol (if it had sense) would despise its worshippers. Indeed, Butler hardly merited any thing on the score of loyalty to the house of Stuart. True wit is not a parasite plant. The strokes which it aims at folly and knavery on one side of a question, tell equally home on the other. Dr. Zachary Grey, who added notes to the poem, and abused the leaders of Cromwell's party by name, would be more likely to have gained a pension for his services than Butler, who was above such petty work. A poem like Hudibras could not be *made to order of a court.* Charles might very well have reproached the author with wanting to shew his own wit and sense rather than to favour a tottering cause; and he has even been suspected, in parts of his poem, of glancing at majesty itself. He in general ridicules not persons, but things, not a party, but their principles, which may belong, as time and occasion serve, to one set of solemn pretenders or another. This he has done most effectually, in every possible way, and from every possible source, learned or unlearned. He has exhausted the moods and figures of satire and sophistry.[1] It would be possible to deduce the different forms of syllogism in Aristotle, from the different violations or mock-imitations of them in Butler. He fulfils every one of Barrow's conditions of wit, which I have enumerated in the first Lecture. He makes you laugh or smile by comparing the high to the low,[2] or by pretending to raise the low to the lofty;[3] he succeeds equally in the familiarity of his illustrations,[4] or their incredible extravagance,[5] by comparing things that are alike or not alike. He surprises equally by his coincidences or contradictions, by spinning out a long-winded flimsy excuse, or by turning short upon you with the point-blank truth. His rhymes are as witty as his reasons, equally remote from what common custom would suggest;[1] and he startles you sometimes by an empty sound like a blow upon a drum-head,[2] by a pun upon one word,[3] and by splitting another in two at the end of a verse, with the same alertness and power over the odd and unaccountable in the combinations of sounds as of images.[4]

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[1] 'And have not two saints power to use
A greater privilege than three Jews?'

* * * * *

'Her voice, the music of the spheres,
So loud it deafens mortals' ears,
As wise philosophers have thought,
And that 's the cause we hear it not.'

[2] 'No Indian prince has to his palace
More followers than a thief to the gallows.'

[3] 'And in his nose, like Indian king,
He (Bruin) wore for ornament a ring.'

[4] 'Whose noise whets valour sharp, like beer
By thunder turned to vinegar.'

[5] 'Replete with strange hermetic powder,
That wounds nine miles point-blank would solder.'

* * * * * *

'His tawny beard was th' equal grace
Both of his wisdom and his face;
In cut and die so like a tile,
A sudden view it would beguile:
The upper part thereof was whey,
The nether orange mixed with grey.
This hairy meteor did denounce
The fall of sceptres and of crowns;
With grisly type did represent
Declining age of government;
And tell with hieroglyphic spade
Its own grave and the state's were made.'

* * * * *

'This sword a dagger had his page,
That was but little for his age;
And therefore waited on him so,
As dwarfs upon knight errants do.'

There are as many shrewd aphorisms in his works, clenched by as many quaint and individual allusions, as perhaps in any author whatever. He makes none but palpable hits, that may be said to give one's understanding a rap on the knuckles.[5] He is, indeed, sometimes too prolific, and spins his antithetical sentences out, one after another, till the reader, not the author, is wearied. He is, however, very seldom guilty of repetitions or wordy paraphrases of himself; but he sometimes comes rather too near it; and interrupts the thread of his argument (for narrative he has none) by a tissue of epigrams, and the tagging of points and conundrums without end. The fault, or original sin of his genius, is, that from too much leaven it ferments and runs over; and there is, unfortunately, nothing in his subject to restrain and keep it within compass. He has no story good for any thing; and his characters are good for very little. They are too low and mechanical, or too much one thing, personifications, as it were, of nicknames, and bugbears of popular prejudice and vulgar cant, unredeemed by any virtue, or difference or variety of disposition. There is no relaxation or shifting of the parts; and the impression in some degree fails of its effect, and becomes questionable from its being always the same. The satire looks, at length, almost like special-pleading: it has nothing to confirm it in the apparent good humour or impartiality of the writer. It is something revolting to see an author persecute his characters, the cherished offspring of his brain, in this manner, without mercy. Hudibras and Ralpho have immortalised Butler; and what has he done for them in return, but set them up to be 'pilloried on infamy's high and lasting stage?' This is ungrateful!

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[1] 'And straight another with his flambeau,
Gave Ralpho o'er the eyes a damn'd blow.'

* * * * *

'That deals in destiny's dark counsels,
And sage opinions of the moon sells.'

[2] 'The mighty Tottipottimoy
Sent to our elders an envoy.'

[3] 'For Hebrew *roots*, although they 're found
To flourish most in barren ground.'

[4] 'Those wholesale critics that in coffee-
Houses cry down all philosophy.'

[5] 'This we among ourselves may speak,
But to the wicked or the weak
We must be cautious to declare
Perfection-truths, such as these are.'

The rest of the characters have, in general, little more than their names and professions to distinguish them. We scarcely know one from another, Cerdon, or Orsin, or Crowdero, and are often obliged to turn back, to connect their several adventures together. In fact, Butler drives only at a set of obnoxious opinions, and runs into general declamations. His poem in its essence is a satire, or didactic poem. It is not virtually dramatic, or narrative. It is composed of digressions by the author. He instantly breaks off in the middle of a story, or incident, to comment upon and turn it into ridicule. He does not give characters but topics, which would do just as well in his own mouth without agents, or machinery of any kind. The long digression in Part III. in which no mention is made of the hero, is just as good and as much an integrant part of the poem as the rest. The conclusion is lame and impotent, but that is saying nothing; the beginning and middle are equally so as to historical merit. There is no keeping in his characters, as in Don Quixote; nor any enjoyment of the ludicrousness of their situations, as in Hogarth. Indeed, it requires a considerable degree of sympathy to enter into and describe to the life even the ludicrous eccentricities of others, and there is no appearance of sympathy or liking to his subject in Butler. His humour is to his wit, 'as one grain of wheat in a bushel of chaff: you shall search all day, and when you find it, it is not worth the trouble.' Yet there are exceptions. The most decisive is, I think, the description of the battle between Bruin and his foes, Part I. Canto iii., and again of the triumphal procession in Part II. Canto ii. of which the principal features are copied in Hogarth's election print, the Chairing of the successful candidate. The account of Sidrophel and Whackum is another instance, and there are some few others, but rarely sprinkled up and down.[1]

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[1] The following are nearly all I can remember.—

'Thus stopp'd their fury and the basting
Which towards Hudibras was hasting.'

It is said of the bear, in the fight with the dogs—

'And setting his right foot before,
He raised himself to shew how tall
His person was above them all.'

* * * * *

The widow, the termagant heroine of the poem, is still more disagreeable than her lover; and her sarcastic account of the passion of love, as consisting entirely in an attachment to land and houses, goods and chattels, which is enforced with all the rhetoric the author is master of, and hunted down through endless similes, is evidently false. The vulgarity and meanness of sentiment which Butler complains of in the Presbyterians, seems at last from long familiarity and close contemplation to have tainted his own mind. Their worst vices appear to have taken root in his imagination. Nothing but what was selfish and groveling sunk into his memory, in the depression of a menial situation under his supposed hero. He has, indeed, carried his private grudge too far into his general speculations. He even makes out the rebels to be cowards and well beaten, which does not accord with the history of the times. In an excess of zeal for church and state, he is too much disposed to treat religion as a cheat, and liberty as a farce. It was the cant of that day (from

'At this the knight grew high in chafe,
And staring furiously on Ralph,
He trembled and look'd pale with ire,
Like ashes first, then red as fire.'
* * * * *

'The knight himself did after ride,
Leading Crowdero by his side,
And tow'd him if he lagged behind,
Like boat against the tide and wind.'
* * * * *

And rais'd upon his desperate foot,
On stirrup-side he gazed about.'
* * * * *

And Hudibras, who used to ponder
On such sights with judicious wonder.'
* * * * *

The beginning of the account of the procession in Part II. is as follows:—

'Both thought it was the wisest course
To wave the fight and mount to horse,
And to secure by swift retreating,
Themselves from danger of worse beating:
Yet neither of them would disparage
By uttering of his mind his courage.
Which made 'em stoutly keep their ground,
With horror and disdain wind-bound.
And now the cause of all their fear
By slow degrees approach'd so near,
They might distinguish different noise
Of horns and pans, and dogs and boys,
And kettle-drums, whose sullen dub
Sounds like the hooping of a tub.'

which he is not free) to cry down sanctity and sobriety as marks or disaffection, as it is the cant of this, to hold them up as proofs of loyalty and staunch monarchical principles. Religion and morality are, in either case, equally made subservient to the spirit of party, and a stalking-horse to the love of power. Finally, there is a want of pathos and humour, but no want of interest in Hudibras. It is difficult to lay it down. One thought is inserted into another; the links in the chain of reasoning are so closely rivetted, that the attention seldom flags, but is kept alive (without any other assistance) by the mere force of writing. There are occasional indications of poetical fancy, and an eye for natural beauty; but these are kept under or soon discarded, judiciously enough, but it should seem, not for lack of power, for they are certainly as masterly as they are rare. Such are the burlesque description of the stocks, or allegorical prison, in which first Crowdero, and then Hudibras, is confined: the passage beginning—

'As when an owl that 's in a barn,
Sees a mouse creeping in the corn,
Sits still and shuts his round blue eyes,
As if he slept,' &c.

And the description of the moon going down in the early morning, which is as pure, original, and picturesque as possible:—

'The queen of night, whose large command
Rules all the sea and half the land,
And over moist and crazy brains
In high spring-tides at midnight reigns,
Was now declining to the west,
To go to bed and take her rest.'

Butler is sometimes scholastic, but he makes his learning tell to good account; and for the purposes of burlesque, nothing can be better fitted than the scholastic style.

Butler's Remains are nearly as good and full of sterling genius as his principal poem. Take the following ridicule of the plan of the Greek tragedies as an instance.

—'Reduce all tragedy, by rules of art,
Back to its ancient theatre, a cart,
And make them henceforth keep the beaten roads
Of reverend choruses and episodes;
Reform and regulate a puppet-play,
According to the true and ancient way;
That not an actor shall presume to squeak,
Unless he have a license for 't in Greek:

Nor devil in the puppet-play be allowed
To roar and spit fire, but to fright the crowd,
Unless some god or demon chance to have piques
Against an ancient family of Greeks;
That other men may tremble and take warning
How such a fatal progeny they're born in;
For none but such for tragedy are fitted,
That have been ruined only to be pitied:
And only those held proper to deter,
Who have th' ill luck against their wills to err;
Whence only such as are of middling sizes,
Betwixt morality and venial vices,
Are qualified to be destroyed by fate,
For other mortals to take warning at.'

Upon Critics.

His ridicule of Milton's Latin style is equally severe, but not so wel founded.

I have only to add a few words respecting the dramatic writer about this time, before we arrive at the golden period of our comedy Those of Etherege[1] are good for nothing, except The Man of Mode or Sir Fopling Flutter, which is, I think, a more exquisite and air picture of the manners of that age than any other extant. Sir Foplin himself is an inimitable coxcomb, but pleasant withal. He is a sui of clothes personified. Dorimant (supposed to be Lord Rochester is the genius of grace, gallantry, and gaiety. The women in thi courtly play have very much the look and air (but something mor demure and significant) of Sir Peter Lely's beauties. Harriet, th mistress of Dorimant, who 'tames his wild heart to her loving hand, is the flower of the piece. Her natural, untutored grace and spirit her meeting with Dorimant in the Park, bowing and mimicking him and the luxuriant description which is given of her fine person altogether form one of the *chef d'œuvres* of dramatic painting. should think this comedy would bear reviving; and if Mr. Listo were to play Sir Fopling, the part would shine out with doubl lustre, 'like the morn risen on mid-noon.'—Dryden's comedies hav all the point that there is in ribaldry, and all the humour that ther is in extravagance. I am sorry I can say nothing better of them He was not at home in this kind of writing, of which he wa himself conscious. His play was *horse-play*. His wit (what ther is of it) is ingenious and scholar-like, rather than natural and dramatic Thus Burr, in the Wild Gallant, says to Failer, 'She shall soone cut an atom than part us.'—His plots are pure *voluntaries* in absurdity that bend and shift to his purpose without any previous notice or reason, and are governed by final causes. Sir Martin Mar-all, which was taken from the Duchess of Newcastle, is the best of his plays, and the origin of the Busy Body. Otway's comedies do no sort of credit to him: on the contrary, they are as desperate as his fortunes. The Duke of Buckingham's famous Rehearsal, which has made, and deservedly, so much noise in the world, is in a great measure taken from Beaumont and Fletcher's Knight of the Burning Pestle, which was written in ridicule of the London apprentices in the reign of Elizabeth, who had a great hand in the critical decisions of that age There were other dramatic writers of this period, noble and plebeian. I shall only mention one other piece, the Committee, I believe by Sir Robert Howard, which has of late been cut down into the farce called Honest Thieves, and which I remember reading with a great deal of pleasure many years ago.

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[1] Love in a Tub, and She Would if She Could.

One cause of the difference between the immediate reception and lasting success of dramatic works at this period may be, that after the court took the play-houses under its particular protection, every thing became very much an affair of private patronage. If an author could get a learned lord or a countess-dowager to bespeak a box at his play, and applaud the doubtful passages, he considered his business as done. On the other hand, there was a reciprocity between men of letters and their patrons; critics were 'mitigated into courtiers, and submitted,' as Mr. Burke has it, 'to the soft collar of social esteem,' in pronouncing sentence on the works of lords and ladies. How ridiculous this seems now! What a hubbub it would create, if it were known that a particular person of fashion and title had taken a front-box in order to decide on the fate of a first play! How the newspaper critics would laugh in their sleeves! How the public would sneer! But at this time there was no public. I will not say, therefore, that these times are better than those; but they are better, I think, in this respect. An author now-a-days no longer hangs dangling on the frown of a lord, or the smile of a lady of quality (the one governed perhaps by his valet, and the other by her waiting-maid), but throws himself boldly, making a lover's leap of it, into the broad lap of public opinion, on which he falls like a feather-bed; and which, like the great bed of Ware, is wide enough to hold us all very comfortably!

LECTURE IV

ON WYCHERLEY, CONGREVE, VANBRUGH, AND FARQUHAR

Comedy is a 'graceful ornament to the civil order; the Corinthian capital of polished society.' Like the mirrors which have been added to the sides of one of our theatres, it reflects the images of grace, of gaiety, and pleasure double, and completes the perspective of human life. To read a good comedy is to keep the best company in the world, where the best things are said, and the most amusing happen. The wittiest remarks are always ready on the tongue, and the luckiest occasions are always at hand to give birth to the happiest conceptions. Sense makes strange havoc of nonsense. Refinement acts as a foil to affectation, and affectation to ignorance. Sentence after sentence tells. We don't know which to admire most, the observation, or the answer to it. We would give our fingers to be able to talk so ourselves, or to hear others talk so. In turning over the pages of the best comedies, we are almost transported to another world, and escape from this dull age to one that was all life, and whim, and mirth, and humour. The curtain rises, and a gayer scene presents itself, as on the canvass of Watteau. We are admitted behind the scenes like spectators at court, on a levee or birth-day; but it is the court, the gala day of wit and pleasure, of gallantry and Charles II! What an air breathes from the name! what a rustling of silks and waving of plumes! what a sparkling of diamond ear-rings and shoe-buckles! What bright eyes, (ah, those were Waller's Sacharissa's as she passed!) what killing looks and graceful motions! How the faces of the whole ring are dressed in smiles! how the repartee goes round! how wit and folly, elegance and awkward imitation of it, set one another off! Happy, thoughtless age, when kings and nobles led purely ornamental lives; when the utmost stretch of a morning's study went no farther than the choice of a sword-knot, or the adjustment of a side-curl; when the soul spoke out in all the pleasing eloquence of dress; and beaux and belles, enamoured of themselves in one another's follies, fluttered like gilded butterflies, in giddy mazes, through the walks of St. James's Park!

The four principal writers of this style of comedy (which I think the best) are undoubtedly Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar. The dawn was in Etherege, as its latest close was in Sheridan.—It is hard to say which of these four is best, or in what each of them excels, they had so many and such great excellences.

Congreve is the most distinct from the others, and the most easily defined, both from what he possessed, and from what he wanted. He had by far the most wit and elegance, with less of other things, of humour, character, incident, &c. His style is inimitable, nay perfect. It is the highest model of comic dialogue. Every sentence is replete with sense and satire, conveyed in the most polished and pointed terms. Every page presents a shower of brilliant conceits, is a tissue of epigrams in prose, is a new triumph of wit, a new conquest over dulness. The fire of artful raillery is nowhere else so well kept up. This style, which he was almost the first to introduce, and which he carried to the utmost pitch of classical refinement, reminds one exactly of Collins's description of wit as opposed to humour,

> 'Whose jewels in his crisped hair
> Are placed each other's light to share.'

Sheridan will not bear a comparison with him in the regular antithetical construction of his sentences, and in the mechanical artifices of his style, though so much later, and though style in general has been so much studied, and in the mechanical part so much improved since then. It bears every mark of being what he himself in the dedication of one of his plays tells us that it was, a spirited copy taken off and carefully revised from the most select society of his time, exhibiting all the sprightliness, ease, and animation of familiar conversation, with the correctness and delicacy of the most finished composition. His works are a singular treat to those who have cultivated a taste for the niceties of English style: there is a peculiar flavour in the very words, which is to be found in hardly any other writer. To the mere reader his writings would be an irreparable loss: to the stage they are already become a dead letter, with the exception of one of them, Love for Love. This play is as full of character, incident, and stage-effect, as almost any of those of his contemporaries, and fuller of wit than any of his own, except perhaps the Way of the World. It still acts, and is still acted well. The effect of it is prodigious on the well-informed spectator. In particular, Munden's Foresight, if it is not just the thing, is a wonderfully rich and powerful piece of comic acting. His look is planet-struck; his dress and appearance like one of the signs of the Zodiac taken down. Nothing can be more bewildered; and it only wants a little more helplessness, a little more of the doating querulous garrulity of age, to be all that one conceives of the superannuated, star-gazing original. The gay, unconcerned opening of this play, and the romantic generosity of the conclusion, where

Valentine, when about to resign his mistress, declares—'I neve valued fortune, but as it was subservient to my pleasure; and m only pleasure was to please this lady,'—are alike admirable. Th peremptory bluntness and exaggerated descriptions of Sir Sampso Legend are in a vein truly oriental, with a Shakespearian cast c language, and form a striking contrast to the quaint credulity an senseless superstitions of Foresight. The remonstrance of his so to him, 'to divest him, along with his inheritance, of his reaso thoughts, passions, inclinations, affections, appetites, senses, and th huge train of attendants which he brought into the world with him, with his valet's accompanying comments, is one of the most eloquen and spirited specimens of wit, pathos, and morality, that is to b found. The short scene with Trapland, the money-broker, is of th first water. What a picture is here drawn of Tattle! 'Mor misfortunes, Sir!' says Jeremy. *Valentine.* 'What, another dun? *Jeremy.* 'No, Sir, but Mr. Tattle is come to wait upon you.' Wha an introduction to give of an honest gentleman in the shape of misfortune! The scenes between him, Miss Prue, and Ben, ar of a highly coloured description. Mrs. Frail and Mrs. Foresigh are 'sisters every way;' and the bodkin which Mrs. Foresigh brings as a proof of her sister's levity of conduct, and which is s convincingly turned against her as a demonstration of her own— 'Nay, if you come to that, where did you find that bodkin?'—is on of the trophies of the moral justice of the comic drama. The Ol Bachelor and Double Dealer are inferior to Love for Love, but on is never tired of reading them. The fault of the last is, that Lad Touchwood approaches, in the turbulent impetuosity of her characte and measured tone of her declamation, too near to the tragedy-queen and that Maskwell's plots puzzle the brain by their intricacy, as the stagger our belief by their gratuitous villainy. Sir Paul and Lad Pliant, and my Lord and Lady Froth, are also scarcely credible i the extravagant insipidity and romantic vein of their follies, i which they are notably seconded by the lively Mr. Brisk and 'dyin Ned Careless.'

The Way of the World was the author's last and most carefull finished performance. It is an essence almost too fine; and th sense of pleasure evaporates in an aspiration after something th seems too exquisite ever to have been realised. After inhaling th spirit of Congreve's wit, and tasting 'love's thrice reputed nectar in his works, the head grows giddy in turning from the highe point of rapture to the ordinary business of life; and we can wit difficulty recal the truant Fancy to those objects which we are fa to take up with here, *for better, for worse.* What can be mo enchanting than Millamant and her morning thoughts, her *doux sommeils*? What more provoking than her reproach to her lover, who proposes to rise early, 'Ah! idle creature!' The meeting of these two lovers after the abrupt dismissal of Sir Wilful, is the height of careless and voluptuous elegance, as if they moved in air, and drank a finer spirit of humanity.

> '*Millamant.* Like Phœbus sung the no less amorous boy.
> *Mirabell.* Like Daphne she, as lovely and as coy.'

Millamant is the perfect model of the accomplished fine lady:

> 'Come, then, the colours and the ground prepare,
> Dip in the rainbow, trick her off in air;
> Choose a firm cloud, before it falls, and in it
> Catch ere she change, the Cynthia of a minute.'

She is the ideal heroine of the comedy of high life, who arrives at the height of indifference to every thing from the height of satisfaction; to whom pleasure is as familiar as the air she draws; elegance worn as a part of her dress; wit the habitual language which she hears and speaks; love, a matter of course; and who has nothing to hope or to fear, her own caprice being the only law to herself, and rule to those about her. Her words seem composed of amorous sighs—her looks are glanced at prostrate admirers or envious rivals.

> 'If there 's delight in love, 'tis when I see
> That heart that others bleed for, bleed for me.'

She refines on her pleasures to satiety; and is almost stifled in the incense that is offered to her person, her wit, her beauty, and her fortune. Secure of triumph, her slaves tremble at her frown: her charms are so irresistible, that her conquests give her neither surprise nor concern. 'Beauty the lover's gift?' she exclaims, in answer to Mirabell—'Dear me, what is a lover that it can give? Why one makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases; and then if one pleases, one makes more.' We are not sorry to see her tamed down at last, from her pride of love and beauty, into a wife. She is good-natured and generous, with all her temptations to the contrary; and her behaviour to Mirabell reconciles us to her treatment of Witwoud and Petulant, and of her country admirer, Sir Wilful.

Congreve has described all this in his character of Millamant, but he has done no more; and if he had, he would have done wrong. He has given us the finest idea of an artificial character of this kind; but it is still the reflection of an artificial character. The springs of nature, passion, or imagination are but feebly touched. The impressions appealed to, and with masterly address, are habitual external, and conventional advantages: the ideas of birth, of fortune of connexions, of dress, accomplishment, fashion, the opinion of th world, of crowds of admirers, continually come into play, flatter ou vanity, bribe our interest, soothe our indolence, fall in with ou prejudices;—it is these that support the goddess of our idolatry, with which she is every thing, and without which she would be nothing. The mere fine lady of comedy, compared with the heroine of romance or poetry, when stripped of her adventitious ornament and advantages, is too much like the doll stripped of its finery. I thinking of Millamant, we think almost as much of her dress as o her person: it is not so with respect to Rosalind or Perdita. The poet has painted them differently; in colours which 'nature's ow sweet and cunning hand laid on,' with health, with innocence, wit gaiety, 'wild wit, invention ever new;' with pure red and white, like the wilding's blossoms; with warbled wood-notes, like the feathered choir's; with thoughts fluttering on the wings of imagination, and hearts panting and breathless with eager delight. The interest we feel is in themselves; the admiration they excite is fo themselves. They do not depend upon the drapery of circumstances. It is nature that 'blazons herself' in them. Imogen is the same in a lonely cave as in a court; nay more, for she there seems something heavenly—a spirit or a vision; and, as it were, shames her destiny, brighter for the foil of circumstances. Millamant is nothing but a fine lady; and all her airs and affectation would be blown away with the first breath of misfortune. Enviable in drawing-rooms, adorable at her toilette, fashion, like a witch, has thrown its spell around her; but if that spell were broken, her power o fascination would be gone. For that reason I think the characte better adapted for the stage: it is more artificial, more theatrical, more meretricious. I would rather have seen Mrs. Abington's Millamant, than any Rosalind that ever appeared on the stage. Some how, this sort of acquired elegance is more a thing of costume, of air and manner; and in comedy, or on the comic stage, the ligh and familiar, the trifling, superficial, and agreeable, bears, perhaps, rightful sway over that which touches the affections, or exhausts the fancy.—There is a callousness in the worst characters in the Way o the World, in Fainall, and his wife and Mrs. Marwood, not very pleasant; and a grossness in the absurd ones, such as Lady Wishfor and Sir Wilful, which is not a little amusing. Witwoud wishes t declaim, as far as he can, his relationship to this last character, an says, 'he's but his half-brother;' to which Mirabell makes answer— 'Then, perhaps, he's but half a fool.' Peg is an admirable caricatur of rustic awkwardness and simplicity, which is carried to excess without any offence, from a sense of contrast to the refinement of the chief characters in the play. The description of Lady Wishfort's face is a perfect piece of painting. The force of style in this author at times amounts to poetry. Waitwell, who personates Sir Rowland, and Foible, his accomplice in the matrimonial scheme upon her mistress, hang as a dead weight upon the plot. They are mere tools in the hands of Mirabell, and want life and interest. Congreve's characters can all of them speak well, they are mere machines when they come to act. Our author's superiority deserted him almost entirely with his wit. His serious and tragic poetry is frigid and jejune to an unaccountable degree. His *forte* was the description of actual manners, whether elegant or absurd; and when he could not deride the one or embellish the other, his attempts at romantic passion or imaginary enthusiasm are forced, abortive, and ridiculous, or common-place. The description of the ruins of a temple in the beginning of the Mourning Bride, was a great stretch of his poetic genius. It has, however, been over-rated, particularly by Dr. Johnson, who could have done nearly as well himself for a single passage in the same style of moralising and sentimental description. To justify this general censure, and to shew how the lightest and most graceful wit degenerates into the heaviest and most bombastic poetry, I will give one description out of his tragedy, which will be enough. It is the speech which Gonsalez addresses to Almeria:

'Be every day of your long life like this.
The sun, bright conquest, and your brighter eyes
Have all conspired to blaze promiscuous light,
And bless this day with most unequal lustre.
Your royal father, my victorious lord,
Loaden with spoils, and ever-living laurel,
Is entering now, in martial pomp, the palace.
Five hundred mules precede his solemn march,
Which groan beneath the weight of Moorish wealth.
Chariots of war, adorn'd with glittering gems,
Succeed; and next, a hundred neighing steeds,
White as the fleecy rain on Alpine hills;
That bound, and foam, and champ the golden bit,
As they disdain'd the victory they grace.
Prisoners of war in shining fetters follow:
And captains of the noblest blood of Afric
Sweat by his chariot-wheels, and lick and grind,
With gnashing teeth, the dust his triumphs raise.
The swarming populace spread every wall,
And cling, as if with claws they did enforce

Their hold, through clifted stones stretching and staring
As if they were all eyes, and every limb
Would feed its faculty of admiration,
While you alone retire, and shun this sight;
This sight, which is indeed not seen (though twice
The multitude should gaze) in absence of your eyes.'

This passage seems, in part, an imitation of Bolingbroke's entry into London. The style is as different from Shakspeare, as it is from that of Witwoud and Petulant. It is plain that the imagination of the author could not raise itself above the burlesque. His Mask of Semele, Judgment of Paris, and other occasional poems, are even worse. I would not advise any one to read them, or if I did, they would not.

Wycherley was before Congreve; and his Country Wife will last longer than any thing of Congreve's as a popular acting play. It is only a pity that it is not entirely his own; but it is enough so to do him never-ceasing honour, for the best things are his own. His humour is, in general, broader, his characters more natural, and his incidents more striking than Congreve's. It may be said of Congreve, that the workmanship overlays the materials: in Wycherley, the casting of the parts and the fable are alone sufficient to ensure success. We forget Congreve's characters, and only remember what they say: we remember Wycherley's characters, and the incidents they meet with, just as if they were real, and forget what they say, comparatively speaking. Miss Peggy (or Mrs. Margery Pinchwife) is a character that will last for ever, I should hope; and even when the original is no more, if that should ever be, while self-will, curiosity, art, and ignorance are to be found in the same person, it will be just as good and as intelligible as ever in the description, because it is built on first principles, and brought out in the fullest and broadest manner. Agnes, in Moliere's play, has a great deal of the same unconscious impulse and heedless *naïveté*, but hers is sentimentalised and varnished over (in the French fashion) with long-winded apologies and analytical distinctions. It wants the same simple force and *home* truth. It is not so direct and downright. Miss Peggy is not even a novice in casuistry: she blurts out her meaning before she knows what she is saying, and she speaks her mind by her actions oftener than by her words. The outline of the plot is the same; but the point-blank hits and master-strokes, the sudden thoughts and delightful expedients, such as her changing the letters, the meeting her husband plump in the Park, as she is running away from him as fast as her heels can carry her, her being turned out of doors by her jealous booby of a husband, and sent by him to her lover disguised as Alicia, her sister-in-law—occur first in the modern play. There are scarcely any incidents or situations on the stage, which tell like these for pantomimic effect, which give such a tingling to the blood, or so completely take away the breath with expectation and surprise. Miss Prue, in Love for Love, is a lively reflection of Miss Peggy, but without the bottom and weight of metal. Hoyden is a match for her in constitution and complete effect, as Corinna, in the Confederacy, is in mischief, but without the wit. Mrs. Jordan used to play all these characters; and as she played them, it was hard to know which was best. Pinchwife, or Moody, (as he is at present called) is, like others of Wycherley's moral characters, too rustic, abrupt, and cynical. He is a more disagreeable, but less tedious character than the husband of Agnes, and both seem, by all accounts, to have been rightly served. The character of Sparkish is quite new, and admirably hit off. He is an exquisite and suffocating coxcomb; a pretender to wit and letters, without common understanding, or the use of his senses. The class of character is thoroughly exposed and understood; but he persists in his absurd conduct so far, that it becomes extravagant and disgusting, if not incredible, from mere weakness and foppery. Yet there is something in him that we are inclined to tolerate at first, as his professing that 'with him a wit is the first title to respect;' and we regard his unwillingness to be pushed out of the room, and coming back, in spite of their teeth, to keep the company of wits and raillers, as a favourable omen. But he utterly disgraces his pretensions before he has done. With all his faults and absurdities, he is, however, a much less offensive character than Tattle.—Horner is a stretch of probability in the first concoction of that ambiguous character, (for he does not appear at present on the stage as Wycherley made him) but notwithstanding the indecency and indirectness of the means he employs to carry his plans into effect, he deserves every sort of consideration and forgiveness, both for the display of his own ingenuity, and the deep insight he discovers into human nature—such as it was in the time of Wycherley. The author has commented on this character, and the double meaning of the name in his Plain Dealer, borrowing the remarks, and almost the very words of Moliere, who has brought forward and defended his own work against the objections of the precise part of his audience, in his *Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes.* There is no great harm in these occasional plagiarisms, except that they make one uncomfortable at other times, and distrustful of the originality of the whole.—The Plain Dealer is Wycherley's next best work; and is a most severe and poignant moral satire, There is a heaviness about it, indeed, an extravagance, an overdoing both in the style, the plot, and characters, but the truth of feeling and the force of interest prevail over every objection. The character of Manly, the Plain Dealer, is violent, repulsive, and uncouth, which is a fault, though one that seems to have been intended for the sake of contrast; for the portrait of consummate, artful hypocrisy in Olivia, is, perhaps, rendered more striking by it. The indignation excited against this odious and pernicious quality by the masterly exposure to which it is here subjected, is 'a discipline of humanity.' No one can read this play attentively without being the better for it as long as he lives. It penetrates to the core; it shews the immorality and hateful effects of duplicity, by shewing it fixing its harpy fangs in the heart of an honest and worthy man. It is worth ten volumes of sermons. The scenes between Manly after his return, Olivia, Plausible, and Novel, are instructive examples of unblushing impudence, of shallow pretensions to principle, and of the most mortifying reflections on his own situation, and bitter sense of female injustice and ingratitude, on the part of Manly. The devil of hypocrisy and hardened assurance seems worked up to the highest pitch of conceivable effrontery in Olivia, when, after confiding to her cousin the story of her infamy, she, in a moment, turns round upon her for some sudden purpose, and affecting not to know the meaning of the other's allusions to what she has just told her, reproaches her with forging insinuations to the prejudice of her character, and in violation of their friendship. 'Go! you're a censorious ill woman.' This is more trying to the patience than any thing in the Tartuffe. The name of this heroine, and her overtures to Fidelia, as the page, seem to have been suggested by Twelfth Night. It is curious to see how the same subject is treated by two such different authors as Shakspeare and Wycherley. The widow Blackacre and her son are like her lawsuit—everlasting. A more lively, palpable, bustling, ridiculous picture cannot be drawn. Jerry is a hopeful lad, though undutiful and gets out of bad hands into worse. Goldsmith evidently had an eye to these two precious characters, in She Stoops to Conquer. Tony Lumpkin and his mother are of the same family, and the incident of the theft of the casket of jewels, and the bag of parchments, is nearly the same in both authors. Wycherley's other plays are not so good. The Gentleman Dancing Master is a long, foolish farce, in the exaggerated manner of Moliere, but without his spirit or whimsical invention. Love in a Wood, though not what one would wish it to be for the author's sake or our own, is much better, and abounds in several rich and highly-coloured scenes, particularly those in which Miss Lucy, her mother Crossbite, Dapperwit, and Alderman Gripe are concerned. Some of the subordinate characters and intrigues in this comedy are grievously spun out. Wycherley, when he got hold of a good thing, or sometimes even of a bad one, was determined to make the most of it; and might have said with Dogberry, truly enough, 'Had I the tediousness of a king, I could find in my heart to bestow it all upon your worships.' In reading this author's best works, those which one reads most frequently over, and knows almost by heart, one cannot help thinking of the treatment he received from Pope about his verses. It was hardly excusable in a boy of sixteen to an old man of seventy.

Vanbrugh comes next, and holds his own fully with the best. He is no writer at all, as to mere authorship; but he makes up for it by a prodigious fund of comic invention and ludicrous description, bordering somewhat on caricature. Though he did not borrow from him, he was much more like Moliere in genius than Wycherley was, who professedly imitated him. He has none of Congreve's graceful refinement, and as little of Wycherley's serious manner and studied insight into the springs of character; but his exhibition of it in dramatic contrast and unlooked-for situations, where the different parties play upon one another's failings, and into one another's hands, keeping up the jest like a game at battledore and shuttlecock, and urging it to the utmost verge of breathless extravagance, in the mere eagerness of the fray, is beyond that of any other of our writers. His fable is not so profoundly laid, nor his characters so well digested as Wycherley's (who, in these respects, bore some resemblance to Fielding). Vanbrugh does not lay the same deliberate train from the outset to the conclusion, so that the whole may hang together, and tend inevitably from the combination of different agents and circumstances to the same decisive point: but he works out scene after scene, on the spur of the occasion, and from the immediate hold they take of his imagination at the moment, without any previous bias or ultimate purpose, much more powerfully, with more *verve*, and in a richer vein of original invention. His fancy warms and burnishes out as if he were engaged in the real scene of action, and felt all his faculties suddenly called forth to meet the emergency. He has more nature than art: what he does best, he does because he cannot help it. He has a masterly eye to the advantages which certain accidental situations of character present to him on the spot, and he executes the most difficult and rapid theatrical movements at a moment's warning. Of this kind are the inimitable scenes in the Provoked Wife, between Razor and Mademoiselle, where they repeat and act over again the rencontre in the Mulberry-walk between Constant and his mistress, than which nothing was ever more happily conceived, or done to more absolute perfection; that again in the Relapse, where Loveless pushes

Berinthia into the closet; the sudden meeting in the Confederacy between Dick and Mrs. Amlet; the altercation about the letter between Flippanta and Corinna, in the same play, and that again where Brass, at the house of Gripe the money-scrivener, threatens to discover his friend and accomplice, and by talking louder and louder to him, as he tries to evade his demands, extorts a grudging submission from him. This last scene is as follows:—

'*Dick.* I wish my old hobbling mother han't been blabbing something here she should not do.

Brass. Fear nothing, all 's safe on that side yet. But how speaks young mistress's epistle? soft and tender?

Dick. As pen can write.

Brass. So you think all goes well there?

Dick. As my heart can wish.

Brass. You are sure on 't?

Dick. Sure on 't!

Brass. Why then, ceremony aside—[*Putting on his hat*]—you and I must have a little talk, Mr. Amlet.

Dick. Ah, Brass, what art thou going to do? wo 't ruin me?

Brass. Look you, Dick, few words; you are in a smooth way of making your fortune; I hope all will roll on. But how do you intend matters shall pass 'twixt you and me in this business?

Dick. Death and furies! What a time does take to talk on 't?

Brass. Good words, or I betray you; they have already heard of one Mr. Amlet in the house.

Dick. Here 's a son of a whore. [*Aside.*

Brass. In short, look smooth, and be a good prince. I am your valet, 'tis true: your footman, sometimes, which I 'm enraged at; but you have always had the ascendant I confess: when we were schoolfellows, you made me carry your books, make your exercise, own your rogueries, and sometimes take a whipping for you. When we were fellow-'prentices, though I was your senior, you made me open the shop, clean my master's shoes, cut last at dinner, and eat all the crust. In our sins too, I must own you still kept me under; you soar'd up to adultery with the mistress, while I was at humble fornication with the maid. Nay, in our punishments you still made good your post; for when once upon a time I was sentenced but to be whipp'd, I cannot deny but you were condemn'd to be hang'd. So that in all times, I must confess, your inclinations have been greater and nobler than mine; however, I cannot consent that you should at once fix fortune for life, and I dwell in my humilities for the rest of my days.

Dick. Hark thee, Brass, if I do not most nobly by thee, I 'm a dog.

Brass. And when?

Dick. As soon as ever I am married.

Brass. Ay, the plague take thee.

Dick. Then you mistrust me?

Brass. I do, by my faith. Look you, Sir, some folks we mistrust, because we don't know them: others we mistrust, because we do know them: and for one of these reasons I desire there may be a bargain beforehand: if not [*raising his voice*] look ye, Dick Amlet—

Dick. Soft, my dear friend and companion. The dog will ruin me [*Aside*]. Say, what is 't will content thee?

Brass. O ho!

Dick. But how canst thou be such a barbarian?

Brass. I learnt it at Algiers.

Dick. Come, make thy Turkish demand then.

Brass. You know you gave me a bank-bill this morning to receive for you.

Dick. I did so, of fifty pounds; 'tis thine. So, now thou art satisfied all is fixed.

Brass. It is not indeed. There 's a diamond necklace you robb'd your mother of e'en now.

Dick. Ah, you Jew!

Brass. No words.

Dick. My dear Brass!

Brass. I insist.

Dick. My old friend!

Brass. Dick Amlet [*raising his voice*] I insist.

Dick. Ah, the cormorant [*Aside*].—Well, 'tis thine: thou'lt never thrive with it.

Brass. When I find it begins to do me mischief, I 'll give it you again. But I must have a wedding suit.

Dick. Well.

Brass. A stock of linen.

Dick. Enough.

Brass. Not yet——a silver-hilted sword.

Dick. Well, thou shalt have that too. Now thou hast every thing.

Brass. Heav'n forgive me, I forgot a ring of remembrance. I would not forget all these favours for the world: a sparkling diamond will be always playing in my eye, and put me in mind of them.

Dick. This unconscionable rogue! [*Aside*]—Well, I 'll bespeak one for thee.

Brass. Brilliant.

Dick. It shall. But if the thing don't succeed after all—

Brass. I am a man of honour and restore: and so, the treaty being finish'd, I strike my flag of defiance, and fall into my respects again.'

[*Takes off his hat.*

The Confederacy is a comedy of infinite contrivance and intrigue, with a matchless spirit of impudence. It is a fine careless *exposé* of heartless want of principle: for there is no anger or severity against vice expressed in it, as in Wycherley. The author's morality in all cases (except his Provoked Wife, which was undertaken as a penance for past peccadillos) sits very loose upon him. It is a little upon the turn; 'it does somewhat smack.' Old Palmer, as Dick Amlet, asking his mother's blessing on his knee, was the very idea of a graceless son.—His sweetheart Corinna is a Miss Prue, but nature works in her more powerfully.—Lord Foppington, in the Relapse, is a most splendid caricature: he is a personification of the foppery and folly of dress and external appearance in full feather. He blazes out and dazzles sober reason with ridiculous ostentation. Still I think this character is a copy from Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter, and upon the whole, perhaps, Sir Fopling is the more natural grotesque of the two. His soul is more in his dress; he is a more disinterested coxcomb. The lord is an ostentatious, strutting, vain-glorious blockhead: the knight is an unaffected, self-complacent, serious admirer of his equipage and person. For instance, what they severally say on the subject of contemplating themselves in the glass, is a proof of this. Sir Fopling thinks a looking-glass in the room 'the best company in the world;' it is another self to him: Lord Foppington merely considers it as necessary to adjust his appearance, that he may make a figure in company. The finery of the one has an imposing air of grandeur about it, and is studied for effect: the other is really in love with a laced suit, and is hand and glove with the newest-cut fashion. He really thinks his tailor or peruke-maker the greatest man in the world, while his lordship treats them familiarly as necessary appendages of his person. Still this coxcomb-nobleman's effeminacy and mock-heroic vanity are admirably depicted, and held up to unrivalled ridicule; and his courtship of Miss Hoyden is excellent in all its stages, and ends oracularly.

Lord Foppington.—'Now, for my part, I think the wisest thing a man can do with an aching heart, is to put on a serene countenance; for a philosophical air is the most becoming thing in the world to the face of a person of quality: I will therefore bear my disgrace like a great man, and let the people see I am above an affront. [*then turning to his brother*] Dear Tam, since things are thus fallen out, pr'ythee give me leave to wish thee joy, I do it *de bon cœur*, strike me dumb: you have married a woman beautiful in her person, charming in her airs, prudent in her conduct, constant in her inclinations, and of a nice morality—stap my vitals!'

Poor Hoyden fares ill in his lordship's description of her, though she could expect no better at his hands for her desertion of him. She wants sentiment, to be sure, but she has other qualifications—she is a fine bouncing piece of flesh and blood. Her first announcement is decisive—'Let loose the greyhound, and lock up Hoyden.' Her declaration, 'It 's well they 've got me a husband, or ecod, I 'd marry the baker,' comes from her mouth like a shot from a culverin, and leaves no doubt, by its effect upon the ear, that she would have made it good in the sequel, if she had not been provided for. Her indifference to the man she is to marry, and her attachment to the finery and the title, are justified by an attentive observation of nature in its simplest guise. There is, however, no harm in Hoyden; she merely wishes to consult her own inclination: she is by no means like Corinna in the Confederacy, 'a devilish girl at the bottom,' nor is it her great delight to plague other people.—Sir Tunbelly Clumsy is the right worshipful and worthy father of so delicate an offspring. He is a coarse, substantial contrast to the flippant and flimsy Lord Foppington. If the one is not without reason 'proud to be at the head of so prevailing a party' as that of coxcombs, the other may look big and console himself (under some affronts) with being a very competent representative, a knight of the shire, of the once formidable, though now obsolete class of country squires, who had no idea beyond the boundaries of their own estates, or the circumference of their own persons. His unwieldy dulness gives, by the rule of contraries, a lively sense of lightness and grace: his stupidity answers all the purposes of wit. His portly paunch repels a jest like a woolsack: a sarcasm rebounds from him like a ball. His presence is a cure for gravity; and he is a standing satire upon himself and the class in natural history to which he belonged.—Sir John Brute, in the Provoked Wife, is an animal of the same English growth, but of a cross-grained breed. He has a spice of the demon mixed up with the brute; is mischievous as well as stupid; has improved his natural parts by a town education and example; opposes the fine-lady airs and graces of his wife by brawling oaths, impenetrable surliness, and pot-house valour; overpowers any tendency she might have to vapours or hysterics, by the fumes of tobacco and strong beer; and thinks to be master in his own house by roaring in taverns, reeling home drunk every night, breaking lamps, and beating the watch. He does not, however, find this lordly method answer. He turns out to be a coward as well as a bully, and dares not resent the injuries he has provoked by his unmanly behaviour. This was Garrick's favourite part; and I have heard that his acting in the drunken scene, in which he was disguised not as a clergyman, but as a woman of the town, which was an alteration of his own to suit the delicacy of the times, was irresistible. The ironical conversations in this play between Belinda and Lady Brute, as well as those in the Relapse between Amanda and her cousin Berinthia, will do to compare with Congreve in the way of wit and studied raillery, but they will not stand the comparison. Araminta and Clarissa keep up the ball between them with more spirit, for their conversation is very like that of kept-mistresses; and the mixture of fashionable *slang* and professed want of principle gives a sort of zest and high seasoning t their confidential communications, which Vanbrugh could supply a well as any body. But he could not do without the taint o grossness and licentiousness. Lady Townly is not the really viciou character, nor quite the fine lady, which the author would have her t be. Lady Grace is so far better; she is what she pretends to be merely *sober* and insipid.—Vanbrugh's *forte* was not the sentimenta or didactic; his genius flags and grows dull when it is not put int action, and wants the stimulus of sudden emergency, or the fortuitou collision of different motives, to call out all its force and vivacity His antitheses are happy and brilliant contrasts of character; hi *double entendres* equivocal situations; his best jokes are practica devices, not epigrammatic conceits. His wit is that which i emphatically called *mother-wit*. It brings those who possess it, or t whom he lends it, into scrapes by its restlessness, and brings them ou of them by its alacrity. Several of his favourite characters ar knavish, adroit adventurers, who have all the gipsy jargon, th cunning impudence, cool presence of mind, selfishness, and indefatigable industry; all the excuses, lying, dexterity, the intellectua juggling and legerdemain tricks, necessary to fit them for this sort o predatory warfare on the simplicity, follies, or vices of mankind He discovers the utmost dramatic generalship in bringing off hi characters at a pinch, and by an instantaneous *ruse de guerre*, whe the case seems hopeless in any other hands. The train of hi associations, to express the same thing in metaphysical language, lie in following the suggestions of his fancy into every possible connexio of cause and effect, rather than into every possible combination o likeness or difference. His ablest characters shew that they are s by displaying their ingenuity, address, and presence of mind i critical junctures, and in their own affairs, rather than their wisdo or their wit 'in intellectual gladiatorship,' or in speculating on th affairs and characters of other people.

Farquhar's chief characters are also adventurers; but they ar adventurers of a romantic, not a knavish stamp, and succeed no les by their honesty than their boldness. They conquer their difficulties and effect their 'hair-breadth 'scapes' by the impulse of natura enthusiasm and the confidence of high principles of gallantry an honour, as much as by their dexterity and readiness at expedients They are real gentlemen, and only pretended impostors. Vanbrugh' upstart heroes are without 'any relish of salvation,' without generosity virtue, or any pretensions to it. We have little sympathy for them and no respect at all. But we have every sort of good-will toward Farquhar's heroes, who have as many peccadillos to answer for, an play as many rogue's tricks, but are honest fellows at bottom. I know little other difference between these two capital writers and copyists of nature, than that Farquhar's nature is the better nature of the two. We seem to like both the author and his favourites. He has humour, character, and invention, in common with the other, with a more unaffected gaiety and spirit of enjoyment, which overflows and sparkles in all he does. He makes us laugh from pleasure oftener than from malice. He somewhere prides himself in having introduced on the stage the class of comic heroes here spoken of, which has since become a standard character, and which represents the warm-hearted, rattle-brained, thoughtless, high-spirited young fellow, who floats on the back of his misfortunes without repining, who forfeits appearances, but saves his honour—and he gives us to understand that it was his own. He did not need to be ashamed of it. Indeed there is internal evidence that this sort of character is his own, for it pervades his works generally, and is the moving spirit that informs them. His comedies have on this account probably a greater appearance of truth and nature than almost any others. His incidents succeed one another with rapidity, but without premeditation; his wit is easy and spontaneous; his style animated, unembarrassed, and flowing; his characters full of life and spirit, and never overstrained so as to 'o'erstep the modesty of nature,' though they sometimes, from haste and carelessness, seem left in a crude, unfinished state. There is a constant ebullition of gay, laughing invention, cordial good humour, and fine animal spirits, in his writings.

Of the four writers here classed together, we should perhaps have courted Congreve's acquaintance most, for his wit and the elegance of his manners; Wycherley's, for his sense and observation on human nature; Vanbrugh's, for his power of farcical description and telling a story; Farquhar's, for the pleasure of his society, and the love of good fellowship. His fine gentlemen are not gentlemen of fortune and fashion, like those in Congreve; but are rather 'God Almighty's gentlemen.' His valets are good fellows: even his chambermaids are some of them disinterested and sincere. But his fine ladies, it must be allowed, are not so amiable, so witty, or accomplished, as those in Congreve. Perhaps they both described women in high-life as they found them: Congreve took their conversation, Farquhar their conduct. In the way of fashionable vice and petrifying affectation, there is nothing to come up to his Lady Lurewell, in the Trip to the Jubilee. She by no means makes good Mr. Burke's courtly and chivalrous observation, that the evil of vice consists principally in its want of refinement; and one benefit of the dramatic exhibition of such characters is, that they overturn false maxims of morality, and settle accounts fairly and satisfactorily between theory and practice. Her lover, Colonel Standard, is indeed an awkward incumbrance upon so fine a lady: it was a character that the poet did not like: and he has merely sketched him in, leaving him to answer for himself as well as he could, which is but badly. We have no suspicion, either from his conduct, or from any hint dropped by accident, that he is the first seducer and the possessor of the virgin affections of Lady Lurewell. The double transformation of this virago from vice to virtue, and from virtue to vice again, her plausible pretensions and artful wiles, her violent temper and dissolute passions, shew a thorough knowledge of the effects both of nature and habit in making up human character. Farquhar's own heedless turn for gallantry would be likely to throw him upon such a character; and his goodness of heart and sincerity of disposition would teach him to expose its wanton duplicity and gilded rottenness. Lurewell is almost as abandoned a character as Olivia, in the Plain Dealer; but the indignation excited against her is of a less serious and tragic cast. Her peevish disgust and affected horror at every thing that comes near her, form a very edifying picture. Her dissatisfaction and *ennui* are not mere airs and graces worn for fashion's sake; but are real and tormenting inmates of her breast, arising from a surfeit of pleasure and the consciousness of guilt. All that is hateful in the caprice, ill humour, spite, *hauteur*, folly, impudence, and affectation of the complete woman of quality, is contained in the scene between her and her servants in the first act. The depravity would be intolerable, even in imagination, if the weakness were not ludicrous in the extreme. It shews, in the highest degree, the power of circumstances and example to perver the understanding, the imagination, and even the senses. The manne in which the character of the gay, wild, free-hearted, but not altogethe profligate or unfeeling Sir Harry Wildair is played off against the designing, vindictive, imperious, uncontrolable, and unreasonable humours of Lurewell, in the scene where she tries to convince him of his wife's infidelity, while he stops his ears to her pretended proofs, is not surpassed in modern comedy. I shall give it here:—

'*Wildair*. Now, dear madam, I have secur'd my brother, you hav dispos'd of the colonel, and we'll rail at love till we ha'n't a word mor to say.

Lurewell. Ay, Sir Harry. Please to sit a little, Sir. You must know I'm in a strange humour of asking you some questions. How did yo like your lady, pray, Sir?

Wild. Like her! Ha, ha, ha. So very well, faith, that for her very sak I'm in love with every woman I meet.

Lure. And did matrimony please you extremely?

Wild. So very much, that if polygamy were allow'd, I would have a new wife every day.

Lure. Oh, Sir Harry! this is raillery. But your serious thoughts upon the matter, pray.

Wild. Why, then, Madam, to give you my true sentiments of wedlock: I had a lady that I married by chance, she was virtuous by chance, and I lov'd her by great chance. Nature gave her beauty, education an air; and fortune threw a young fellow of five-and-twenty in her lap. I courted her all day, lov'd her all night; she was my mistress one day, and my wife another: I found in one the variety of a thousand, and the very confinement of marriage gave me the pleasure of change.

Lure. And she was very virtuous.

Wild. Look ye, Madam, you know she was beautiful. She had good nature about her mouth, the smile of beauty in her cheeks, sparkling wit in her forehead, and sprightly love in her eyes.

Lure. Pshaw! I knew her very well; the woman was well enough. But you don't answer my question, Sir.

Wild. So, Madam, as I told you before, she was young and beautiful. I was rich and vigorous; my estate gave a lustre to my love, and a swing to our enjoyment; round, like the ring that made us one, our golden pleasures circled without end.

Lure. Golden pleasures! Golden fiddlesticks. What d 'ye tell me of your canting stuff? Was she virtuous, I say?

Wild. Ready to burst with envy; but I will torment thee a little. [*Aside.*] So, Madam, I powder'd to please her, she dress'd to engage me; we toy'd away the morning in amorous nonsense, loll'd away the evening in the Park or the playhouse, and all the night—hem!

Lure. Look ye, Sir, answer my question, or I shall take it ill.

Wild. Then, Madam, there was never such a pattern of unity. Her wants were still prevented by my supplies; my own heart whisper'd me her desires, 'cause she herself was there; no contention ever rose, but the dear strife of who should most oblige: no noise about authority; for neither would stoop to command, 'cause both thought it glory to obey.

Lure. Stuff! stuff! stuff! I won't believe a word on 't.

Wild. Ha, ha, ha. Then, Madam, we never felt the yoke of matrimony, because our inclinations made us one; a power superior to the forms of wedlock. The marriage torch had lost its weaker light in the bright flame of mutual love that join'd our hearts before; then—

Lure. Hold, hold, Sir; I cannot bear it; Sir Harry, I 'm affronted.

Wild. Ha, ha, ha. Affronted!

Lure. Yes, Sir; 'tis an affront to any woman to hear another commended; and I will resent it.—In short, Sir Harry, your wife was a—.

Wild. Buz, Madam—no detraction! I 'll tell you what she was. So much an angel in her conduct, that though I saw another in her arms, I should have thought the devil had rais'd the phantom, and my more conscious reason had given my eyes the lie.

Lure. Very well! Then I a'n't to be believ'd, it seems. But, d 'ye hear, Sir?

Wild. Nay, Madam, do you hear! I tell you, 'tis not in the power of malice to cast a blot upon her fame; and though the vanity of our sex, ar the envy of yours, conspir'd both against her honour, I would not hear syllable. [*Stopping his ear*

Lure. Why then, as I hope to breathe, you shall hear it. The picture the picture! the picture! [*Bawling alou*

Wild. Ran, tan, tan. A pistol-bullet from ear to ear.

Lure. That picture which you had just now from the French marqu for a thousand pound; that very picture did your very virtuous wife sen to the marquis as a pledge of her very virtuous and dying affection. S that you are both robb'd of your honour, and cheated of your money. [*Alou*

Wild. Louder, louder, Madam.

Lure. I tell you, Sir, your wife was a jilt; I know it, I'll swear it. She virtuous! she was a devil!

Wild. [*Sings.*] Tal, al, deral.

Lure. Was ever the like seen! He won't hear me. I burst with malic and now he won't mind me! Won't you hear me yet?

Wild. No, no, Madam.

Lure. Nay, then I can't bear it. [*Bursts out a crying.*] Sir, I must sa that you're an unworthy person, to use a woman of quality at this rat when she has her heart full of malice; I don't know but it may make m miscarry. Sir, I say again and again, that she was no better than one c us, and I know it; I have seen it with my eyes, so I have.

Wild. Good heav'ns deliver me, I beseech thee. How shall I 'scape!

Lure. Will you hear me yet? Dear Sir Harry, do but hear me; I'r longing to speak.

Wild. Oh! I have it.—Hush, hush, hush.

Lure. Eh! what's the matter?

Wild. A mouse! a mouse! a mouse!

Lure. Where? where? where?

Wild. Your petticoats, your petticoats, Madam. [*Lurewell shrieks an runs.*] O my head! I was never worsted by a woman before. But I hav heard so much to know the marquis to be a villain. [*Knocking.*] Nay then, I must run for't. [*Runs out, and returns.*] The entry is stopt by chair coming in; and something there is in that chair that I will discover if I can find a place to hide myself. [*Goes to the closet door.*] Fast! I hav keys about me for most locks about St. James's. Let me see. [*Tries on key.*] No, no; this opens my Lady Planthorn's back-door. [*Tries another.* Nor this; this is the key to my Lady Stakeall's garden. [*Tries a third.* Ay, ay, this does it, faith. [*Goes into the closet.*]'

The dialogue between Cherry and Archer, in the Beaux' Stratagem in which she repeats her well-conned love catechism, is as good a this, but not so fit to be repeated any where but on the stage. Th Beaux' Stratagem is the best of his plays, as a whole; infinitel lively, bustling, and full of point and interest. The assumed disguis of the two principal characters, Archer and Aimwell, is a perpetua amusement to the mind. Scrub is an indispensable appendage to country gentleman's kitchen, and an exquisite confidant for the secrets of young ladies. The Recruiting Officer is not one of Farquhar's best comedies, though it is light and entertaining. It contains chiefly sketches and hints of characters; and the conclusion of the plot is rather lame. He informs us, in the dedication to the published play, that it was founded on some local and personal circumstances that happened in Shropshire, where he was himself a recruiting officer; and it seems not unlikely, that most of the scenes actually took place at the foot of the Wrekin. The Inconstant is much superior to it. The romantic interest and impressive catastrophe of this play I thought had been borrowed from the more poetical and tragedy-practised muse of Beaumont and Fletcher; but I find they are taken from an actual circumstance which took place in the author's knowledge, at Paris. His other pieces, Love and a Bottle, and the Twin Rivals, are not on a par with these; and are no longer in possession of the stage. The public are, after all, not the worst judges.—Farquhar's Letters, prefixed to the collection of his plays, are lively, good humoured, and sensible; and contain, among other things, an admirable exposition of the futility of the dramatic unities of time and place. This criticism preceded Dennis's remarks on that subject, in his Strictures on Mr. Addison's Cato; and completely anticipates all that Dr. Johnson has urged so unanswerably on the subject, in his preface to Shakspeare.

We may date the decline of English comedy from the time of Farquhar. For this several causes might be assigned in the political and moral changes of the times; but among other minor ones, Jeremy Collier, in his View of the English Stage, frightened the poets, and did all he could to spoil the stage, by pretending to reform it; that is, by making it an echo of the pulpit, instead of a reflection of the manners of the world. He complains bitterly of the profaneness of the stage; and is for fining the actors for every oath they utter, to put an end to the practice; as if common swearing had been an invention of the poets and stage-players. He cannot endure that the fine gentlemen drink, and the fine ladies intrigue, in the scenes of Congreve and Wycherley, when things so contrary to law and gospel happened nowhere else. He is vehement against duelling, as a barbarous custom, of which the example is suffered with impunity nowhere but on the stage. He is shocked at the number of fortunes that are irreparably ruined by the vice of gaming on the boards of the theatres. He seems to think that every breach of the ten commandments begins and ends there. He complains that the tame husbands of his time are laughed at on the stage, and that the successful gallants triumph, which was without precedent either in the city or the court. He does not think it enough that the stage 'shews vice its own image, scorn its own feature,' unless they are damned at the same instant, and carried off (like Don Juan) by real devils to the infernal regions, before the faces of the spectators. It seems that the author would have been contented to be present at a comedy or a farce, like a Father Inquisitor, if there was to be an *auto da fé* at the end, to burn both the actors and the poet. This sour, nonjuring critic has a great horror and repugnance at poor human nature, in nearly all its shapes; of the existence of which he appears only to be aware through the stage: and this he considers as the only exception to the practice of piety, and the performance of the whole duty of man; and seems fully convinced, that if this nuisance were abated, the whole world would be regulated according to the creed and the catechism.—This is a strange blindness and infatuation! He forgets, in his overheated zeal, two things: First, That the stage must be copied from real life, that the manners represented there must exist elsewhere, and 'denote a foregone conclusion,' to satisfy common sense.—Secondly, That the stage cannot shock common decency, according to the notions that prevail of it in any age or country, because the exhibition is public. If the pulpit, for instance, had banished all vice and imperfection from the world, as our critic would suppose, we should not have seen the offensive reflection of them on the stage, which he resents as an affront to the cloth, and an outrage on religion. On the contrary, with such a sweeping reformation as this theory implies, the office of the preacher, as well as of the player, would be gone; and if the common peccadillos of lying, swearing, intriguing, fighting, drinking, gaming, and other such obnoxious dramatic common-places, were once fairly got rid of in reality, neither the comic poet would be able to laugh at them on the stage, nor our good-natured author to consign them over to damnation elsewhere. The work is, however, written with ability, and did much mischief: it produced those *do-me-good*, lack-a-daisical, whining, make-believe comedies in the next age, (such as Steele's Conscious Lovers, and others,) which are enough to set one to sleep, and where the author tries in vain to be merry and wise in the same breath; in which the utmost stretch of licentiousness goes no farther than the gallant's being suspected of keeping a mistress, and the highest proof of courage is given in his refusing to accept a challenge.

In looking into the old editions of the comedies of the last age, I find the names of the best actors of those times, of whom scarcely any record is left but in Colley Cibber's Life, and the monument to Mrs. Oldfield, in Westminster Abbey; which Voltaire reckons among the proofs of the liberality, wisdom, and politeness of the English nation:—

> 'Let no rude hand deface it,
> And its forlorn *hic jacet*.'

Authors after their deaths live in their works; players only in their epitaphs and the breath of common tradition. They 'die and leave the world no copy.' Their uncertain popularity is as short-lived as it is dazzling: and in a few years nothing is known of them but that *they were.*

LECTURE V

ON THE PERIODICAL ESSAYISTS

'THE PROPER STUDY OF MANKIND IS MAN'

I NOW come to speak of that sort of writing which has been so successfully cultivated in this country by our periodical Essayists, and which consists in applying the talents and resources of the mind to all that mixed mass of human affairs, which, though not included under the head of any regular art, science, or profession, falls under the cognizance of the writer, and 'comes home to the business and bosoms of men.' *Quicquid agunt homines nostri farrago libelli*, is the general motto of this department of literature. It does not treat of minerals or fossils, of the virtues of plants, or the influence of planets; it does not meddle with forms of belief, or systems of philosophy, nor launch into the world of spiritual existences; but it makes familiar with the world of men and women, records their actions, assigns their motives, exhibits their whims, characterises their pursuits in all their singular and endless variety, ridicules their absurdities, exposes their inconsistencies, 'holds the mirror up to nature, and shews the very age and body of the time its form and pressure;' takes minutes of our dress, air, looks, words, thoughts, and actions; shews us what we are, and what we are not; plays the whole game of human life over before us, and by making us enlightened spectators of its many-coloured scenes, enables us (if possible) to become tolerably reasonable agents in the one in which we have to perform a part. 'The act and practic part of life is thus made the mistress of our theorique.' It is the best and most natural course of study. It is in morals and manners what the experimental is in natural philosophy, as opposed to the dogmatical method. It does not deal in sweeping clauses of proscription and anathema, but in nice distinctions and liberal constructions. It makes up its genera accounts from details, its few theories from many facts. It doe not try to prove all black or all white as it wishes, but lays on th intermediate colours, (and most of them not unpleasing ones,) as finds them blended with 'the web of our life, which is of a mingle yarn, good and ill together.' It inquires what human life is and ha been, to shew what it ought to be. It follows it into courts an camps, into town and country, into rustic sports or learned disputations, into the various shades of prejudice or ignorance, of refinemen or barbarism, into its private haunts or public pageants, into it weaknesses and littlenesses, its professions and its practices—befor it pretends to distinguish right from wrong, or one thing fro another. How, indeed, should it do so otherwise?

> 'Quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
> Plenius et melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.'

The writers I speak of are, if not moral philosophers, moral historian and that's better: or if they are both, they found the one characte upon the other; their premises precede their conclusions; and w put faith in their testimony, for we know that it is true.

Montaigne was the first person who in his Essays led the wa to this kind of writing among the moderns. The great merit o Montaigne then was, that he may be said to have been the first wh had the courage to say as an author what he felt as a man. An as courage is generally the effect of conscious strength, he wa probably led to do so by the richness, truth, and force of his ow observations on books and men. He was, in the truest sense, man of original mind, that is, he had the power of looking at thing for himself, or as they really were, instead of blindly trusting t and fondly repeating what others told him that they were. He g rid of the go-cart of prejudice and affectation, with the learne lumber that follows at their heels, because he could do withou them. In taking up his pen he did not set up for a philosophe wit, orator, or moralist, but he became all these by merely darin to tell us whatever passed through his mind, in its naked simplicit and force, that he thought any ways worth communicating. H did not, in the abstract character of an author, undertake to say a that could be said upon a subject, but what in his capacity as a inquirer after truth he happened to know about it. He was neithe a pedant nor a bigot. He neither supposed that he was bound t know all things, nor that all things were bound to conform to wha he had fancied or would have them to be. In treating of men an manners, he spoke of them as he found them, not according to pre conceived notions and abstract dogmas; and he began by teaching us what he himself was. In criticising books he did not compare them with rules and systems, but told us what he saw to like or dislike in them. He did not take his standard of excellence 'according to an exact scale' of Aristotle, or fall out with a work that was good for any thing, because 'not one of the angles at the four corners was a right one.' He was, in a word, the first author who was not a book-maker, and who wrote not to make converts of others to established creeds and prejudices, but to satisfy his own mind of the truth of things. In this respect we know not which to be most charmed with, the author or the man. There is an inexpressible frankness and sincerity, as well as power, in what he writes. There is no attempt at imposition or concealment, no juggling tricks or solemn mouthing, no laboured attempts at proving himself always in the right, and every body else in the wrong; he says what is uppermost, lays open what floats at the top or the bottom of his mind, and deserves Pope's character of him, where he professes to

> '——pour out all as plain
> As downright Shippen, or as old Montaigne.'[1]

He does not converse with us like a pedagogue with his pupil, whom he wishes to make as great a blockhead as himself, but like a philosopher and friend who has passed through life with thought and observation, and is willing to enable others to pass through it with pleasure and profit. A writer of this stamp, I confess, appears to me as much superior to a common bookworm, as a library of real books is superior to a mere book-case, painted and lettered on the outside with the names of celebrated works. As he was the first to attempt this new way of writing, so the same strong natural mpulse which prompted the undertaking, carried him to the end of his career. The same force and honesty of mind which urged him to throw off the shackles of custom and prejudice, would enable him to complete his triumph over them. He has left little for his successors to achieve in the way of just and original speculation on human life. Nearly all the thinking of the two last centuries of that kind which the French denominate *morale observatrice*, is to be found in Montaigne's Essays: there is the germ, at least, and generally much more. He sowed the seed and cleared away the rubbish, even where others have reaped the fruit, or cultivated and decorated the soil to a greater degree of nicety and perfection.

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[1] Why Pope should say in reference to him, 'Or *more wise* Charron,' is not easy to determine.

There is no one to whom the old Latin adage is more applicable than to Montaigne, '*Pereant isti qui ante nos nostra dixerunt.*' There has been no new impulse given to thought since his time. Among the specimens of criticisms on authors which he has left us, are those on Virgil, Ovid, and Boccaccio, in the account of books which he thinks worth reading, or (which is the same thing) which he finds he can read in his old age, and which may be reckoned among the few criticisms which are worth reading at any age.[1]

Montaigne's Essays were translated into English by Charles Cotton, who was one of the wits and poets of the age of Charles II ; and Lord Halifax, one of the noble critics of that day, declared it to be 'the book in the world he was the best pleased with.' This mode of familiar Essay-writing, free from the trammels of the schools, and the airs of professed authorship, was successfully imitated, about the same time, by Cowley and Sir William Temple, in their miscellaneous Essays, which are very agreeable and learned talking upon paper. Lord Shaftesbury, on the contrary, who aimed at the same easy, *degagé* mode of communicating his thoughts to the world, has quite spoiled his matter, which is sometimes valuable, by his manner, in which he carries a certain flaunting, flowery, figurative, flirting style of amicable condescension to the reader, to an excess more tantalising than the most starched and ridiculous formality of the age of James I. There is nothing so tormenting as the affectation of ease and freedom from affectation.

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[1] As an instance of his general power of reasoning, I shall give his chapter entitled *One Man's Profit is another's Loss*, in which he has nearly anticipated Mandeville's celebrated paradox of private vices being public benefits :—

'Demades, the Athenian, condemned a fellow-citizen, who furnished out funerals, for demanding too great a price for his goods : and if he got an estate, it must be by the death of a great many people : but I think it a sentence ill grounded, forasmuch as no profit can be made, but at the expense of some other person, and that every kind of gain is by that rule liable to be condemned. The tradesman thrives by the debauchery of youth, and the farmer by the dearness of corn ; the architect by the ruin of buildings, the officers of justice by quarrels and law-suits ; nay, even the honour and function of divines is owing to our mortality and vices. No physician takes pleasure in the health even of his best friends, said the ancient Greek comedian, nor soldier in the peace of his country ; and so of the rest. And, what is yet worse, let every one but examine his own heart, and he will find that his private wishes spring and grow up at the expense of some other person. Upon which consideration this thought came into my head, that nature does not hereby deviate from her general policy ; for the naturalists hold, that the birth, nourishment, and increase of any one thing is the decay and corruption of another :

Nam quodcunque suis mutatum finibus exit,
Continuo hoc mors est illius, quod fuit ante. i.e.

For what from its own confines chang'd doth pass,
Is straight the death of what before it was.'

Vol. I. *Chap.* xxi.

The ice being thus thawed, and the barrier that kept authors at a distance from common sense and feeling broken through, the transition was not difficult from Montaigne and his imitators, to our Periodical Essayists. These last applied the same unrestrained expression of their thoughts to the more immediate and passing scenes of life, to temporary and local matters; and in order to discharge the invidious office of *Censor Morum* more freely, and with less responsibility, assumed some fictitious and humorous disguise, which, however, in a great degree corresponded to their own peculiar habits and character. By thus concealing their own name and person under the title of the Tatler, Spectator, &c. they were enabled to inform us more fully of what was passing in the world, while the dramatic contrast and ironical point of view to which the whole is subjected, added a greater liveliness and *piquancy* to the descriptions. The philosopher and wit here commences newsmonger, makes himself master of 'the perfect spy o' th' time,' and from his various walks and turns through life, brings home little curious specimens of the humours, opinions, and manners of his contemporaries, as the botanist brings home different plants and weeds, or the mineralogist different shells and fossils, to illustrate their several theories, and be useful to mankind.

The first of these papers that was attempted in this country was set up by Steele in the beginning of the last century; and of all our periodical Essayists, the *Tatler* (for that was the name he assumed) has always appeared to me the most amusing and agreeable. Montaigne, whom I have proposed to consider as the father of this kind of personal authorship among the moderns, in which the reader is admitted behind the curtain, and sits down with the writer in his gown and slippers, was a most magnanimous and undisguised egotist; but Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. was the more disinterested gossip of the two. The French author is contented to describe the peculiarities of his own mind and constitution, which he does with a copious and unsparing hand. The English journalist good-naturedly lets you into the secret both of his own affairs and those of others. A young lady, on the other side Temple Bar, cannot be seen at her glass for half a day together, but Mr. Bickerstaff takes due notice of it; and he has the first intelligence of the symptoms of the *belle* passion appearing in any young gentleman at the West-end of the town. The departures and arrivals of widows with handsome jointures, either to bury their grief in the country, or to procure a second husband in town, are punctually recorded in his pages. He is well acquainted with the celebrated beauties of the preceding age at the court of Charles II.; and the old gentleman (as he feigns himself) often grows romantic in recounting 'the disastrous strokes which his youth suffered' from the glances of their bright eyes, and their unaccountable caprices. In particular, he dwells with a secret satisfaction on the recollection of one of his mistresses, who left him for a richer rival, and whose constant reproach to her husband, on occasion of any quarrel between them, was 'I, that might have married the famous Mr. Bickerstaff, to be treated in this manner!' The club at the Trumpet consists of a set of persons almost as well worth knowing as himself. The cavalcade of the justice of the peace, the knight of the shire, the country squire, and the young gentleman, his nephew, who came to wait on him at his chambers, in such form and ceremony, seem not to have settled the order of their precedence to this hour;[1] and I should hope that the upholsterer and his companions, who used to sun themselves in the Green Park, and who broke their rest and fortunes to maintain the balance of power in Europe, stand as fair a chance for immortality as some modern politicians. Mr. Bickerstaff himself is a gentleman and a scholar, a humourist, and a man of the world; with a great deal of nice easy *naïveté* about him. If he walks out and is caught in a shower of rain, he makes amends for this unlucky accident by a criticism on the shower in Virgil, and concludes with a burlesque copy of verses on a city-shower. He entertains us, when he dates from his own apartment, with a quotation from Plutarch, or a moral reflection; from the Grecian coffee-house with politics; and from Wills', or the Temple, with the poets and players, the beaux and men of wit and pleasure about town. In reading the pages of the Tatler, we seem as if suddenly carried back to the age of Queen Anne, of toupees and full-bottomed periwigs. The whole appearance of our dress and manners undergoes a delightful metamorphosis. The beaux and the belles are of a quite different species from what they are at present; we distinguish the dappers, the smarts, and the pretty fellows, as they pass by Mr. Lilly's shop-windows in the Strand; we are introduced to Betterton and Mrs. Oldfield behind the scenes; are made familiar with the persons and performances of Will Estcourt or Tom Durfey; we listen to a dispute at a tavern, on the merits of the Duke of Marlborough, or Marshal Turenne; or are present at the first rehearsal of a play by Vanbrugh, or the reading of a new poem by Mr. Pope. The privilege of thus virtually transporting ourselves to past times, is even greater than that of visiting distant places in reality. London, a hundred years ago, would be much better worth seeing than Paris at the present moment.

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[1] No. 125.

It will be said, that all this is to be found, in the same or a greater degree, in the Spectator. For myself, I do not think so; or at least, there is in the last work a much greater proportion of commonplace matter. I have, on this account, always preferred the Tatler to the Spectator. Whether it is owing to my having been earlier or better acquainted with the one than the other, my pleasure in reading these two admirable works is not in proportion to their comparative reputation. The Tatler contains only half the number of volumes, and, I will venture to say, nearly an equal quantity of sterling wit and sense. 'The first sprightly runnings' are there; it has more of the original spirit, more of the freshness and stamp of nature. The indications of character and strokes of humour are more true and frequent; the reflections that suggest themselves arise more from the occasion, and are less spun out into regular dissertations. They are more like the remarks which occur in sensible conversation, and less like a lecture. Something is left to the understanding of the reader. Steele seems to have gone into his closet chiefly to set down what he observed out of doors. Addison seems to have spent most of his time in his study, and to have spun out and wire-drawn the hints, which he borrowed from Steele, or took from nature, to the utmost. I am far from wishing to depreciate Addison's talents, but I am anxious to do justice to Steele, who was, I think, upon the whole, a less artificial and more original writer. The humorous descriptions of Steele resemble loose sketches, or fragments of a comedy; those of Addison are rather comments or ingenious paraphrases on the genuine text. The characters of the club not only in the Tatler, but in the Spectator, were drawn by Steele. That of Sir Roger de Coverley is among the number. Addison has, however, gained himself immortal honour by his manner of filling up this last character. Who is there that can forget, or be insensible to, the inimitable nameless graces and varied traits of nature and of old English character in it—to his unpretending virtues and amiable weaknesses—to his modesty, generosity, hospitality, and eccentric whims—to the respect of his neighbours, and the affection of his domestics—to his wayward, hopeless, secret passion for his fair enemy, the widow, in which there is more of real romance and true delicacy, than in a thousand tales of knight-errantry—(we perceive the hectic flush of his cheek, the faltering of his tongue in speaking of her bewitching airs and 'the whiteness of her hand')—to the havoc he makes among the game in his neighbourhood—to his speech from the bench, to shew the Spectator what is thought of him in the country—to his unwillingness to be put up as a sign-post, and his having his own likeness turned into the Saracen's head—to his gentle reproof of the baggage of a gipsy that tells him 'he has a widow in his line of life'—to his doubts as to the existence of witchcraft, and protection of reputed witches—to his account of the family pictures, and his choice of a chaplain—to his falling asleep at church, and his reproof of John Williams, as soon as he recovered from his nap, for talking in sermon-time. The characters of Will, Wimble, and Will. Honeycomb are not a whit behind their friend, Sir Roger, in delicacy and felicity. The delightful simplicity and good-humoured officiousness in the one, are set off by the graceful affectation and courtly pretension in the other. How long since I first became acquainted with these two characters in the Spectator! What old-fashioned friends they seem, and yet I am not tired of them, like so many other friends, nor they of me! How airy these abstractions of the poet's pen stream over the dawn of our acquaintance with human life! how they glance their fairest colours on the prospect before us! how pure they remain in it to the last, like the rainbow in the evening-cloud, which the rude hand of time and experience can neither soil nor dissipate! What a pity that we cannot find the reality, and yet if we did, the dream would be over. I once thought I knew a Will. Wimble, and a Will. Honeycomb, but they turned out but indifferently; the originals in the Spectator still read, word for word, the same that they always did. We have only to turn to the page, and find them where we left them!—Many of the most exquisite pieces in the Tatler, it is to be observed, are Addison's, as the Court of Honour, and the Personification of Musical Instruments, with almost all those papers that form regular sets or series. I do not know whether the picture of the family of an old college acquaintance, in the Tatler, where the children run to let Mr. Bickerstaff in at the door, and where the one that loses the race that way, turns back to tell the father that he is come; with the nice gradation of incredulity in the little boy, who is got into Guy of Warwick, and the Seven Champions, and who shakes his head at the improbability of Æsop's Fables, is Steele's or Addison's, though I believe it belongs to the former. The account of the two sisters, one of whom held up her head higher than ordinary, from having on a pair of flowered garters, and that of the married lady who complained to the Tatler of the neglect of her husband, with her answers to some *home* questions that were put to her, are unquestionably Steele's.—If the Tatler is not inferior to the Spectator as a record of manners and character, it is superior to it in the interest of many of the stories. Several of the incidents related there by Steele have never been surpassed in the heart-rending pathos of private distress. I might refer to those of the lover and his mistress, when the theatre, in which they were, caught fire; of the bridegroom, who by accident kills his bride on the day of their marriage; the story of Mr. Eustace and his wife; and the fine dream about his own mistress when a youth. What has given its superior reputation to the Spectator, is the greater gravity of its pretensions, its moral dissertations and critical reasonings, by which I confess myself less edified than by other things, which are thought more lightly of. Systems and opinions change, but nature is always true. It is the moral and didactic tone of the Spectator which makes us apt to think of Addison (according to Mandeville's sarcasm) as 'a parson in a tie-wig.' Many of his moral Essays are, however, exquisitely beautiful and quite happy. Such are the reflections on cheerfulness, those in Westminster Abbey, on the Royal Exchange, and particularly some very affecting ones on the death of a young lady in the fourth volume. These, it must be allowed, are the perfection of elegant sermonising. His critical Essays are not so good. I prefer Steele's occasional selection of beautiful poetical passages, without any affectation of analysing their beauties, to Addison's finer-spun theories. The best criticism in the Spectator, that on the Cartoons of Raphael, of which Mr. Fuseli has availed himself with great spirit in his Lectures, is by Steele.[1] I owed this acknowledgment to a writer who has so often put me in good humour with myself, and every thing about me, when few things else could, and when the tomes of casuistry and ecclesiastical history, with which the little duodecimo volumes of the Tatler were overwhelmed and surrounded, in the only library to which I had access when a boy, had tried their tranquillising effects upon me in vain. I had not long ago in my hands, by favour of a friend, an original copy of the quarto edition of the Tatler, with a list of the subscribers. It is curious to see some names there which we should hardly think of, (that of Sir Isaac Newton is among them,) and also to observe the degree of interest excited by those of the different persons, which is not determined according to the rules of the Herald's College. One literary name lasts as long as a whole race of heroes and their descendants! The Guardian, which followed the Spectator, was, as may be supposed, inferior to it.

The dramatic and conversational turn which forms the distinguishing feature and greatest charm of the Spectator and Tatler, is quite lost in the Rambler by Dr. Johnson. There is no reflected light thrown on human life from an assumed character, nor any direct one from a display of the author's own. The Tatler and Spectator are, as it were, made up of notes and memorandums of the events and incidents of the day, with finished studies after nature, and characters fresh from the life, which the writer moralises upon, and turns to account as they come before him: the Rambler is a collection of moral Essays, or scholastic theses, written on set subjects, and of which the individual characters and incidents are merely artificial illustrations, brought in to give a pretended relief to the dryness of didactic discussion. The Rambler is a splendid and imposing common-place-book of general topics, and rhetorical declamation on the conduct and business of human life. In this sense, there is hardly a reflection that had been suggested on such subjects which is not to be found in this celebrated work, and there is, perhaps, hardly a reflection to be found in it which had not been already suggested and developed by some other author, or in the common course of conversation. The mass of intellectual wealth here heaped together is immense, but it is rather the result of gradual accumulation, the produce of the general intellect, labouring in the mine of knowledge and reflection, than dug out of the quarry, and dragged into the light by the industry and sagacity of a single mind. I am not here saying that Dr. Johnson was a man without originality, compared with the ordinary run of men's minds, but he was not a man of original thought or genius, in the sense in which Montaigne or Lord Bacon was. He opened no new vein of precious ore, nor did he light upon any single pebbles of uncommon size and unrivalled lustre. We seldom meet with any thing to 'give us pause;' he does not set us thinking for the first time. His reflections present themselves like reminiscences; do not disturb the ordinary march of our thoughts; arrest our attention by the stateliness of their appearance, and the costliness of their garb, but pass on and mingle with the throng of our impressions. After closing the volumes of the Rambler, there is nothing that we remember as a new truth gained to the mind, nothing indelibly stamped upon the memory; nor is there any passage that we wish to turn to as embodying any known principle or observation, with such force and beauty that justice can only be done to the idea in the author's own words. Such, for instance, are many of the passages to be found in Burke, which shine by their own light, belong to no class, have neither equal nor counterpart, and of which we say that no one but the author could have written them! There is neither the same boldness of design, nor mastery of execution in Johnson. In the one, the spark of genius seems to have met with its congenial matter: the shaft is sped; the forked lightning dresses up the face of nature in ghastly smiles, and the loud thunder rolls far away from the ruin that is made. Dr. Johnson's style, on the contrary, resembles rather the rumbling of mimic thunder at one of our theatres; and the light he throws upon a subject is like the dazzling effect of phosphorus, or an *ignis fatuus* of words. There is a wide difference, however, between perfect originality and perfect common-place: neither ideas nor expressions are trite or vulgar because they are not quite new. They are valuable, and ought to be repeated, if they have not become quite common; and Johnson's style both of reasoning and imagery holds the middle rank between startling novelty and vapid common-place. Johnson has as much originality of thinking as Addison; but then he wants his familiarity of illustration, knowledge of character, and delightful humour.—What most distinguishes Dr. Johnson from other writers is the pomp and uniformity of his style. All his periods are cast in the same mould, are of the same size and shape, and consequently have little fitness to the variety of things he professes to treat of. His subjects are familiar, but the author is always upon stilts. He has neither ease nor simplicity, and his efforts at playfulness, in part, remind one of the lines in Milton:—

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[1] The antithetical style and verbal paradoxes which Burke was so fond of, in which the epithet is a seeming contradiction to the substantive, such as 'proud submission and dignified obedience,' are, I think, first to be found in the Tatler.

> '——— The elephant
> To make them sport wreath'd his proboscis lithe.

His Letters from Correspondents, in particular, are more pompous and unwieldy than what he writes in his own person. This want of relaxation and variety of manner has, I think, after the first effects of novelty and surprise were over, been prejudicial to the matter. It takes from the general power, not only to please, but to instruct. The monotony of style produces an apparent monotony of ideas. What is really striking and valuable, is lost in the vain ostentation and circumlocution of the expression; for when we find the same pains and pomp of diction bestowed upon the most trifling as upon the most important parts of a sentence or discourse, we grow tired of distinguishing between pretension and reality, and are disposed to confound the tinsel and bombast of the phraseology with want of weight in the thoughts. Thus, from the imposing and oracular nature of the style, people are tempted at first to imagine that our author's speculations are all wisdom and profundity: till having found out their mistake in some instances, they suppose that there is nothing but common-place in them, concealed under verbiage and pedantry; and in both they are wrong. The fault of Dr. Johnson's style is, that it reduces all things to the same artificial and unmeaning level. It destroys all shades of difference, the association between words and things. It is a perpetual paradox and innovation. He condescends to the familiar till we are ashamed of our interest in it: he expands the little till it looks big. 'If he were to write a fable of little fishes,' as Goldsmith said of him, 'he would make them speak like great whales.' We can no more distinguish the most familiar objects in his descriptions of them, than we can a well-known face under a huge painted mask. The structure of his sentences, which was his own invention, and which has been generally imitated since his time, is a species of rhyming in prose, where one clause answers to another in measure and quantity, like the tagging of syllables at the end of a verse; the close of the period follows as mechanically as the oscillation of a pendulum, the sense is balanced with the sound; each sentence, revolving round its centre of gravity, is contained with itself like a couplet, and each paragraph forms itself into a stanza. Dr. Johnson is also a complete balance-master in the topics of morality. He never encourages hope, but he counteracts it by fear; he never elicits a truth, but he suggests some objection in answer to it. He seizes and alternately quits the clue of reason, lest it should involve him in the labyrinths of endless error: he wants confidence in himself and his fellows. He dares not trust himself with the immediate impressions of things, for fear of compromising his dignity; or follow them into their consequences, for fear of committing his prejudices. His timidity is the result, not of ignorance, but of morbid apprehension. 'He runs the great circle, and is still at home.' No advance is made by his writings in any sentiment, or mode of reasoning. Out of the pale of established authority and received dogmas, all is sceptical, loose, and desultory: he seems in imagination to strengthen the dominion of prejudice, as he weakens and dissipates that of reason; and round the rock of faith and power, on the edge of which he slumbers blindfold and uneasy, the waves and billows of uncertain and dangerous opinion roar and heave for evermore. His Rasselas is the most melancholy and debilitating moral speculation that ever was put forth. Doubtful of the faculties of his mind, as of his organs of vision, Johnson trusted only to his feelings and his fears. He cultivated a belief in witches as an out-guard to the evidences of religion; and abused Milton, and patronised Lauder, in spite of his aversion to his countrymen, as a step to secure the existing establishment in church and state. This was neither right feeling nor sound logic.

The most triumphant record of the talents and character of

Johnson is to be found in Boswell's Life of him. The man was superior to the author. When he threw aside his pen, which he regarded as an incumbrance, he became not only learned and thoughtful, but acute, witty, humorous, natural, honest; hearty and determined, 'the king of good fellows and wale of old men.' There are as many smart repartees, profound remarks, and keen invectives to be found in Boswell's 'inventory of all he said,' as are recorded of any celebrated man. The life and dramatic play of his conversation forms a contrast to his written works. His natural powers and undisguised opinions were called out in convivial intercourse. In public, he practised with the foils on: in private, he unsheathed the sword of controversy, and it was 'the Ebro's temper.' The eagerness of opposition roused him from his natural sluggishness and acquired timidity; he returned blow for blow; and whether the trial were of argument or wit, none of his rivals could boast much of the encounter. Burke seems to have been the only person who had a chance with him: and it is the unpardonable sin of Boswell's work, that he has purposely omitted their combats of strength and skill. Goldsmith asked, 'Does he wind into a subject like a serpent, as Burke does?' And when exhausted with sickness, he himself said, 'If that fellow Burke were here now, he would kill me.' It is to be observed, that Johnson's colloquial style was as blunt, direct, and downright, as his style of studied composition was involved and circuitous. As when Topham Beauclerc and Langton knocked him up at his chambers, at three in the morning, and he came to the door with the poker in his hand, but seeing them, exclaimed, 'What, is it you, my lads? then I'll have a frisk with you!' and he afterwards reproaches Langton, who was a literary milksop, for leaving them to go to an engagement 'with some *un-idead* girls.' What words to come from the mouth of the great moralist and lexicographer! His good deeds were as many as his good sayings. His domestic habits, his tenderness to servants, and readiness to oblige his friends; the quantity of strong tea that he drank to keep down sad thoughts; his many labours reluctantly begun, and irresolutely laid aside; his honest acknowledgement of his own, and indulgence to the weaknesses of others; his throwing himself back in the post-chaise with Boswell, and saying, 'Now I think I am a good-humoured fellow,' though nobody thought him so, and yet he was; his quitting the society of Garrick and his actresses, and his reason for it; his dining with Wilkes, and his kindness to Goldsmith; his sitting with the young ladies on his knee at the Mitre, to give them good advice, in which situation, if not explained, he might be taken for Falstaff; and last and noblest, his carrying the unfortunate victim of disease and dissipation on his back up through Fleet Street, (an act which realises the parable of the good Samaritan)—all these, and innumerable others, endear him to the reader, and must be remembered to his lasting honour. He had faults, but they lie buried with him. He had his prejudices and his intolerant feelings; but he suffered enough in the conflict of his own mind with them. For if no man can be happy in the free exercise of his reason, no wise man can be happy without it. His were not time-serving, heartless, hypocritical prejudices; but deep, inwoven, not to be rooted out but with life and hope, which he found from old habit necessary to his own peace of mind, and thought so to the peace of mankind. I do not hate, but love him for them. They were between himself and his conscience; and should be left to that higher tribunal, 'where they in trembling hope repose, the bosom of his Father and his God.' In a word, he has left behind him few wiser or better men.

The herd of his imitators shewed what he was by their disproportionate effects. The Periodical Essayists, that succeeded the Rambler, are, and deserve to be, little read at present. The Adventurer, by Hawksworth, is completely trite and vapid, aping all the faults of Johnson's style, without any thing to atone for them. The sentences are often absolutely unmeaning; and one half of each might regularly be left blank. The World, and Connoisseur, which followed, are a little better; and in the last of these there is one good idea, that of a man in indifferent health, who judges of every one's title to respect from their possession of this blessing, and bows to a sturdy beggar with sound limbs and a florid complexion, while he turns his back upon a lord who is a valetudinarian.

Goldsmith's Citizen of the World, like all his works, bears the stamp of the author's mind. It does not 'go about to cozen reputation without the stamp of merit.' He is more observing, more original, more natural and picturesque than Johnson. His work is written on the model of the Persian Letters; and contrives to give an abstracted and somewhat perplexing view of things, by opposing foreign prepossessions to our own, and thus stripping objects of their customary disguises. Whether truth is elicited in this collision of contrary absurdities, I do not know; but I confess the process is too ambiguous and full of intricacy to be very amusing to my plain understanding. For light summer reading, it is like walking in a garden full of traps and pitfalls. It necessarily gives rise to paradoxes, and there are some very bold ones in the Essays, which would subject an author less established to no very agreeable sort of *censura literaria*. Thus the Chinese philosopher exclaims very unadvisedly, 'The bonzes and priests of all religions keep up superstition and imposture:

all reformations begin with the laity.' Goldsmith, however, was staunch in his practical creed, and might bolt speculative extravagances with impunity. There is a striking difference in this respect between him and Addison, who, if he attacked authority, took care to have common sense on his side, and never hazarded any thing offensive to the feelings of others, or on the strength of his own discretional opinion. There is another inconvenience in this assumption of an exotic character and tone of sentiment, that it produces an inconsistency between the knowledge which the individual has time to acquire, and which the author is bound to communicate. Thus the Chinese has not been in England three days before he is acquainted with the characters of the three countries which compose this kingdom, and describes them to his friend at Canton, by extracts from the newspapers of each metropolis. The nationality of Scotchmen is thus ridiculed :—'*Edinburgh*. We are positive when we say, that Sanders Macgregor, lately executed for horse-stealing, is not a native of Scotland, but born at Carrickfergus.' Now this is very good ; but how should our Chinese philosopher find it out by instinct? Beau Tibbs, a prominent character in this little work, is the best comic sketch since the time of Addison ; unrivalled in his finery, his vanity, and his poverty.

I have only to mention the names of the Lounger and the Mirror, which are ranked by the author's admirers with Sterne for sentiment, and with Addison for humour. I shall not enter into that: but I know that the story of La Roche is not like the story of Le Fevre, nor one hundredth part so good. Do I say this from prejudice to the author? No: for I have read his novels. Of the Man of the World I cannot think so favourably as some others ; nor shall I here dwell on the picturesque and romantic beauties of Julia de Roubigné, the early favourite of the author of Rosamond Gray ; but of the Man of Feeling I would speak with grateful recollections: nor is it possible to forget the sensitive, irresolute, interesting Harley: and that lone figure of Miss Walton in it, that floats in the horizon, dim and ethereal, the day-dream of her lover's youthful fancy—better, far better than all the realities of life!

LECTURE VI

ON THE ENGLISH NOVELISTS

THERE is an exclamation in one of Gray's Letters—'Be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon!'—If I did not utter a similar aspiration at the conclusion of the last new novel which I read (I would not give offence by being more particular as to the name) it was not from any want of affection for the class of writing to which it belongs: for, without going so far as the celebrated French philosopher, who thought that more was to be learnt from good novels and romances than from the gravest treatises on history and morality, yet there are few works to which I am oftener tempted to turn for profit or delight, than to the standard productions in this species of composition. We find there a close imitation of men and manners; we see the very web and texture of society as it really exists, and as we meet with it when we come into the world. If poetry has 'something more divine in it,' this savours more of humanity. We are brought acquainted with the motives and characters of mankind, imbibe our notions of virtue and vice from practical examples, and are taught a knowledge of the world through the airy medium of romance. As a record of past manners and opinions, too, such writings afford the best and fullest information. For example, I should be at a loss where to find in any authentic documents of the same period so satisfactory an account of the general state of society, and of moral, political, and religious feeling in the reign of George II. as we meet with in the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his friend Mr. Abraham Adams. This work, indeed, I take to be a perfect piece of statistics in its kind. In looking into any regular history of that period, into a learned and eloquent charge to a grand jury or the clergy of a diocese, or into a tract on controversial divinity, we should hear only of the ascendancy of the Protestant succession, the horrors of Popery, the triumph of civil and religious liberty, the wisdom and moderation of the sovereign, the happiness of the subject, and the flourishing state of manufactures and commerce. But if we really wish to know what all these fine-sounding names come to, we cannot do better than turn to the works of those, who having no other object than to imitate nature, could only hope for success from the fidelity of their pictures; and were bound (in self-defence) to reduce the boasts of vague theorists and the exaggerations of angry disputants to the mortifying standard of reality. Extremes are said to meet: and the works of imagination, as they are called, sometimes come the nearest to truth and nature. Fielding in speaking on this subject, and vindicating the use and dignity of the style of writing in which he excelled against the loftier pretensions of professed historians, says, that in their productions nothing is true but the names and dates, whereas in his every thing is true but the names and dates. If so, he has the advantage on his side.

I will here confess, however, that I am a little prejudiced on the point in question; and that the effect of many fine speculations has been lost upon me, from an early familiarity with the most striking passages in the work to which I have just alluded. Thus nothing can be more captivating than the description somewhere given by Mr. Burke of the indissoluble connection between learning and nobility; and of the respect universally paid by wealth to piety and morals. But the effect of this ideal representation has always been spoiled by my recollection of Parson Adams sitting over his cup of ale in Sir Thomas Booby's kitchen. Echard 'On the Contempt of the Clergy' is, in like manner, a very good book, and 'worthy of all acceptation:' but, somehow, an unlucky impression of the reality of Parson Trulliber involuntarily checks the emotions of respect, to which it might otherwise give rise: while, on the other hand, the lecture which Lady Booby reads to Lawyer Scout on the immediate expulsion of Joseph and Fanny from the parish, casts no very favourable light on the flattering accounts of our practical jurisprudence which are to be found in Blackstone or De Lolme. The most moral writers, after all, are those who do not pretend to inculcate any moral. The professed moralist almost unavoidably degenerates into the partisan of a system; and the philosopher is too apt to warp the evidence to his own purpose. But the painter of manners gives the facts of human nature, and leaves us to draw the inference: if we are not able to do this, or do it ill, at least it is our own fault.

The first-rate writers in this class, of course, are few; but those few we may reckon among the greatest ornaments and best benefactors of our kind. There is a certain set of them who, as it were, take their rank by the side of reality, and are appealed to as evidence on all questions concerning human nature. The principal of these are Cervantes and Le Sage, who may be considered as having been naturalised among ourselves; and, of native English growth, Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, and Sterne.[1] As this is a department of criticism which deserves more attention than has been usually bestowed upon it, I shall here venture to recur (not from choice, but necessity) to what I have said upon it in a well known periodical publication; and endeavour to contribute my mite towards settling the standard of excellence, both as to degree and kind, in these several writers.

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[1] It is not to be forgotten that the author of Robinson Crusoe was also an Englishman. His other works, such as the Life of Colonel Jack, &c., are of the same cast, and leave an impression on the mind more like that of things than words.

I shall begin with the history of the renowned Don Quixote de la Mancha; who presents something more stately, more romantic, and at the same time more real to the imagination than any other hero upon record. His lineaments, his accoutrements, his pasteboard vizor, are familiar to us; and Mambrino's helmet still glitters in the sun! We not only feel the greatest veneration and love for the knight himself, but a certain respect for all those connected with him, the curate and Master Nicolas the barber, Sancho and Dapple, and even for Rosinante's leanness and his errors.—Perhaps there is no work which combines so much whimsical invention with such an air of truth. Its popularity is almost unequalled; and yet its merits have not been sufficiently understood. The story is the least part of them; though the blunders of Sancho, and the unlucky adventures of his master, are what naturally catch the attention of the majority of readers. The pathos and dignity of the sentiments are often disguised under the ludicrousness of the subject; and provoke laughter when they might well draw tears. The character of Don Quixote himself is one of the most perfect disinterestedness. He is an enthusiast of the most amiable kind; of a nature equally open, gentle, and generous; a lover of truth and justice; and one who had brooded over the fine dreams of chivalry and romance, till they had robbed him of himself, and cheated his brain into a belief of their reality. There cannot be a greater mistake than to consider Don Quixote as a merely satirical work, or as a vulgar attempt to explode 'the long-forgotten order of chivalry.' There could be no need to explode what no longer existed. Besides, Cervantes himself was a man of the most sanguine and enthusiastic temperament; and even through the crazed and battered figure of the knight, the spirit of chivalry shines out with undiminished lustre; as if the author had half-designed to revive the example of past ages, and once more 'witch the world with noble horsemanship.' Oh! if ever the mouldering flame of Spanish liberty is destined to break forth, wrapping the tyrant and the tyranny in one consuming blaze, that the spark of generous sentiment and romantic enterprise, from which it must be kindled, has not been quite extinguished, will perhaps be owing to thee, Cervantes, and to thy Don Quixote!

The character of Sancho is not more admirable in itself, than as a relief to that of the knight. The contrast is as picturesque and striking as that between the figures of Rosinante and Dapple. Never was there so complete a *partie quarrée*:—they answer to one another at all points. Nothing need surpass the truth of physiognomy in the description of the master and man, both as to body and mind; the one lean and tall, the other round and short; the one heroical and courteous, the other selfish and servile; the one full of high-flown fancies, the other a bag of proverbs; the one always starting some romantic scheme, the other trying to keep to the safe side of custom and tradition. The gradual ascendancy, however, obtained by Don Quixote over Sancho, is as finely managed as it is characteristic. Credulity and a love of the marvellous are as natural to ignorance, as selfishness and cunning. Sancho by degrees becomes a kind of lay-brother of the order; acquires a taste for adventures in his own way, and is made all but an entire convert, by the discovery of the hundred crowns in one of his most comfortless journeys. Towards the end, his regret at being forced to give up the pursuit of knight-errantry, almost equals his master's; and he seizes the proposal of Don Quixote for them to turn shepherds with the greatest avidity—still applying it in his own fashion; for while the Don is ingeniously torturing the names of his humble acquaintance into classical terminations, and contriving scenes of gallantry and song, Sancho exclaims, 'Oh, what delicate wooden spoons shall I carve! what crumbs and cream shall I devour!'—forgetting, in his milk and fruits, the pullets and geese at Camacho's wedding.

This intuitive perception of the hidden analogies of things, or, as it may be called, this *instinct of the imagination*, is, perhaps, what stamps the character of genius on the productions of art more than any other circumstance: for it works unconsciously, like nature, and receives its impressions from a kind of inspiration. There is as much of this indistinct keeping and involuntary unity of purpose in Cervantes, as in any author whatever. Something of the same unsettled, rambling humour extends itself to all the subordinate parts and characters of the work. Thus we find the curate confidentially informing Don Quixote, that if he could get the ear of the government, he has something of considerable importance to propose for the good of the state; and our adventurer afterwards (in the course of his peregrinations) meets with a young gentleman who is a candidate for poetical honours, with a mad lover, a forsaken damsel, a Mahometan lady converted to the Christian faith, &c.—all delineated with the same truth, wildness, and delicacy of fancy. The whole work breathes that air of romance, that aspiration after imaginary good, that indescribable longing after something more than we possess: that in all places and in all conditions of life,

> '——still prompts the eternal sigh,
> For which we wish to live, or dare to die!'

The leading characters in Don Quixote are strictly individuals; that is, they do not so much belong to, as form a class by themselves. In other words, the actions and manners of the chief *dramatis personæ* do not arise out of the actions and manners of those around them, or the situation of life in which they are placed, but out of the peculiar dispositions of the persons themselves, operated upon by certain impulses of caprice and accident. Yet these impulses are so true to nature, and their operation so exactly described, that we not only recognise the fidelity of the representation, but recognise it with all the advantages of novelty superadded. They are in the best sense *originals*, namely, in the sense in which nature has her originals. They are unlike any thing we have seen before—may be said to be purely ideal; and yet identify themselves more readily with our imagination, and are retained more strongly in memory, than perhaps any others: they are never lost in the crowd. One test of the truth of this ideal painting, is the number of allusions which Don Quixote has furnished to the whole of civilised Europe; that is to say, of appropriate cases and striking illustrations of the universal principles of our nature. The detached incidents and occasional descriptions of human life are more familiar and obvious; so that we have nearly the same insight here given us into the characters of innkeepers, barmaids, ostlers, and puppet-show men, that we have in Fielding. There is much greater mixture, however, of the pathetic and sentimental with the quaint and humorous, than there ever is in Fielding. I might instance the story of the countryman whom Don Quixote and Sancho met in their doubtful search after Dulcinea, driving his mules to plough at break of day, and 'singing the ancient ballad of Ronscevalles!' The episodes, which are frequently introduced, are excellent, but have, upon the whole, been overrated. They derive their interest from their connexion with the main story. We are so pleased with that, that we are disposed to receive pleasure from every thing else. Compared, for instance, with the serious tales in Boccaccio, they are slight and somewhat superficial. That of Marcella, the fair shepherdess, is, I think, the best. I shall only add, that Don Quixote was, at the time it was published, an entirely original work in its kind, and that the author claims the highest honour which can belong to one, that of being the inventor of a new style of writing. I have never read his Galatea, nor his Loves of

Persiles and Sigismunda, though I have often meant to do it, and I hope to do so yet. Perhaps there is a reason lurking at the bottom of this dilatoriness: I am quite sure the reading of these works could not make me think higher of the author of Don Quixote, and it might, for a moment or two, make me think less.

There is another Spanish novel, Gusman D'Alfarache, nearly of the same age as Don Quixote, and of great genius, though it can hardly be ranked as a novel or a work of imagination. It is a series of strange, unconnected adventures, rather drily told, but accompanied by the most severe and sarcastic commentary. The satire, the wit, the eloquence and reasoning, are of the most potent kind: but they are didactic rather than dramatic. They would suit a homily or a pasquinade as well or better than a romance. Still there are in this extraordinary book occasional sketches of character and humorous descriptions, to which it would be difficult to produce any thing superior. This work, which is hardly known in this country except by name, has the credit, without any reason, of being the original of Gil Blas. There is one incident the same, that of the unsavoury ragout, which is served up for supper at the inn. In all other respects these two works are the very reverse of each other, both in their excellences and defects.—Lazarillo de Tormes has been more read than the Spanish Rogue, and is a work more readable, on this account among others, that it is contained in a duodecimo instead of a folio volume. This, however, is long enough, considering that it treats of only one subject, that of eating, or rather the possibility of living without eating. Famine is here framed into an art, and feasting is banished far hence. The hero's time and thoughts are taken up in a thousand shifts to procure a dinner; and that failing, in tampering with his stomach till supper time, when being forced to go supperless to bed, he comforts himself with the hopes of a breakfast the next morning, of which being again disappointed, he reserves his appetite for a luncheon, and then has to stave it off again by some meagre excuse or other till dinner; and so on, by a perpetual adjournment of this necessary process, through the four and twenty hours round. The quantity of food proper to keep body and soul together is reduced to a *minimum*; and the most uninviting morsels with which Lazarillo meets once a week as a God's-send, are pampered into the most sumptuous fare by a long course of inanition. The scene of this novel could be laid nowhere so properly as in Spain, that land of priestcraft and poverty, where hunger seems to be the ruling passion, and starving the order of the day.

Gil Blas has, next to Don Quixote, been more generally read and admired than any other novel; and in one sense, deservedly so: for it is at the head of its class, though that class is very different from, and I should say inferior to the other. There is little individual character in Gil Blas. The author is a describer of manners, and not of character. He does not take the elements of human nature, and work them up into new combinations (which is the excellence of Don Quixote); nor trace the peculiar and shifting shades of folly and knavery as they are to be found in real life (like Fielding): but he takes off, as it were, the general, habitual impression which circumstances make on certain conditions of life, and moulds all his characters accordingly. All the persons whom he introduces, carry about with them the badge of their profession; and you see little more of them than their costume. He describes men as belonging to distinct classes in society; not as they are in themselves, or with the individual differences which are always to be discovered in nature. His hero, in particular, has no character but that of the successive circumstances in which he is placed. His priests are only described as priests: his valets, his players, his women, his courtiers and his sharpers, are all alike. Nothing can well exceed the monotony of the work in this respect:—at the same time that nothing can exceed the truth and precision with which the general manners of these different characters are preserved, nor the felicity of the particular traits by which their common foibles are brought out. Thus the Archbishop of Grenada will remain an everlasting memento of the weakness of human vanity; and the account of Gil Blas' legacy, of the uncertainty of human expectations. This novel is also deficient in the fable as well as in the characters. It is not a regularly constructed story; but a series of amusing adventures told with equal gaiety and good sense, and in the most graceful style imaginable.

It has been usual to class our own great novelists as imitators of one or other of these two writers. Fielding, no doubt, is more like Don Quixote than Gil Blas; Smollett is more like Gil Blas than Don Quixote; but there is not much resemblance in either case. Sterne's Tristram Shandy is a more direct instance of imitation. Richardson can scarcely be called an imitator of any one; or if he is, it is of the sentimental refinement of Marivaux, or of the verbose gallantry of the writers of the seventeenth century.

There is very little to warrant the common idea that Fielding was an imitator of Cervantes, except his own declaration of such an intention in the title-page of Joseph Andrews, the romantic turn of the character of Parson Adams (the only romantic character in his works), and the proverbial humour of Partridge, which is kept up only for a few pages. Fielding's novels are, in general, thoroughly his own; and they are thoroughly English. What they are most remarkable for, is neither sentiment, nor imagination, nor wit, nor even humour, though there is an immense deal of this last quality; but profound knowledge of human nature, at least of English nature; and masterly pictures of the characters of men as he saw them existing. This quality distinguishes all his works, and is shown almost equally in all of them. As a painter of real life, he was equal to Hogarth; as a mere observer of human nature, he was little inferior to Shakspeare, though without any of the genius and poetical qualities of his mind. His humour is less rich and laughable than Smollett's; his wit as often misses as hits; he has none of the fine pathos of Richardson or Sterne; but he has brought together a greater variety of characters in common life, marked with more distinct peculiarities, and without an atom of caricature, than any other novel writer whatever. The extreme subtlety of observation on the springs of human conduct in ordinary characters, is only equalled by the ingenuity of contrivance in bringing those springs into play, in such a manner as to lay open their smallest irregularity. The detection is always complete, and made with the certainty and skill of a philosophical experiment, and the obviousness and familiarity of a casual observation. The truth of the imitation is indeed so great, that it has been argued that Fielding must have had his materials ready-made to his hands, and was merely a transcriber of local manners and individual habits. For this conjecture, however, there seems to be no foundation. His representations, it is true, are local and individual; but they are not the less profound and conclusive. The feeling of the general principles of human nature operating in particular circumstances, is always intense, and uppermost in his mind; and he makes use of incident and situation only to bring out character.

It is scarcely necessary to give any illustrations. Tom Jones is full of them. There is the account, for example, of the gratitude of the elder Blifil to his brother, for assisting him to obtain the fortune of Miss Bridget Alworthy by marriage; and of the gratitude of the poor in his neighbourhood to Alworthy himself, who had done so much good in the country that he had made every one in it his enemy. There is the account of the Latin dialogues between Partridge and his maid, of the assault made on him during one of these by Mrs. Partridge, and the severe bruises he patiently received on that occasion, after which the parish of Little Baddington rung with the story, that the school-master had killed his wife. There is the exquisite keeping in the character of Blifil, and the want of it in that of Jones. There is the gradation in the lovers of Molly Seagrim; the philosopher Square succeeding to Tom Jones, who again finds that he himself had succeeded to the accomplished Will. Barnes, who had the first possession of her person, and had still possession of her heart, Jones being only the instrument of her vanity, as Square was of her interest. Then there is the discreet honesty of Black George, the learning of Thwackum and Square, and the profundity of Squire Western, who considered it as a physical impossibility that his daughter should fall in love with Tom Jones We have also that gentleman's disputes with his sister, and the inimitable appeal of that lady to her niece.—'I was never so handsome as you, Sophy: yet I had something of you formerly. I was called the cruel Parthenissa. Kingdoms and states, as Tully Cicero says, undergo alteration, and so must the human form!' The adventure of the same lady with the highwayman, who robbed her of her jewels, while he complimented her beauty, ought not to be passed over, nor that of Sophia and her muff, nor the reserved coquetry of her cousin Fitzpatrick, nor the description of Lady Bellaston, nor the modest overtures of the pretty widow Hunt, nor the indiscreet babblings of Mrs. Honour. The moral of this book has been objected to, without much reason; but a more serious objection has been made to the want of refinement and elegance in two principal characters. We never feel this objection, indeed, while we are reading the book: but at other times, we have something like a lurking suspicion that Jones was but an awkward fellow, and Sophia a pretty simpleton. I do not know how to account for this effect, unless it is that Fielding's constantly assuring us of the beauty of his hero, and the good sense of his heroine, at last produces a distrust of both. The story of Tom Jones is allowed to be unrivalled: and it is this circumstance, together with the vast variety of characters, that has given the history of a Foundling so decided a preference over Fielding's other novels. The characters themselves, both in Amelia and Joseph Andrews, are quite equal to any of those in Tom Jones. The account of Miss Matthews and Ensign Hibbert, in the former of these; the way in which that lady reconciles herself to the death of her father; the inflexible Colonel Bath; the insipid Mrs. James, the complaisant Colonel Trent, the demure, sly, intriguing, equivocal Mrs. Bennet, the lord who is her seducer, and who attempts afterwards to seduce Amelia by the same mechanical process of a concert-ticket, a book, and the disguise of a great coat; his little, fat, short-nosed, red-faced, good-humoured accomplice, the keeper of the lodging-house, who, having no pretensions to gallantry herself, has a disinterested delight in forwarding the intrigues and pleasures of others, (to say nothing of honest Atkinson, the story of the miniature-picture of Amelia, and the hashed mutton, which are in a different style,) are masterpieces of description. The whole scene at the lodging-house, the masquerade, &c. in Amelia, are equal in interest to the parallel scenes in Tom Jones, and even more refined in the knowledge of character. For instance, Mrs. Bennet is superior to Mrs. Fitzpatrick in her own way. The uncertainty, in which the event of her interview with her former seducer is left, is admirable. Fielding was a master of what may be called the *double entendre* of character, and surprises you no less by what he leaves in the dark, (hardly known to the persons themselves) than by the unexpected discoveries he makes of the real traits and circumstances in a character with which, till then, you find you were unacquainted. There is nothing at all heroic, however, in the usual style of his delineations. He does not draw lofty characters or strong passions; all his persons are of the ordinary stature as to intellect; and possess little elevation of fancy, or energy of purpose. Perhaps, after all, Parson Adams is his finest character. It is equally true to nature, and more ideal than any of the others. Its unsuspecting simplicity makes it not only more amiable, but doubly amusing, by gratifying the sense of superior sagacity in the reader. Our laughing at him does not once lessen our respect for him. His declaring that he would willingly walk ten miles to fetch his sermon on vanity, merely to convince Wilson of his thorough contempt of this vice, and his consoling himself for the loss of his Æschylus, by suddenly recollecting that he could not read it if he had it, because it is dark, are among the finest touches of *naïveté*. The night-adventures at Lady Booby's with Beau Didapper, and the amiable Slipslop, are the most ludicrous; and that with the huntsman, who draws off the hounds from the poor Parson, because they would be spoiled by following *vermin*, the most profound. Fielding did not often repeat himself; but Dr. Harrison, in Amelia, may be considered as a variation of the character of Adams: so also is Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield; and the latter part of that work, which sets out so delightfully, an almost entire plagiarism from Wilson's account of himself, and Adams's domestic history.

Smollett's first novel, Roderick Random, which is also his best, appeared about the same time as Fielding's Tom Jones; and yet it has a much more modern air with it: but this may be accounted for, from the circumstance that Smollett was quite a young man at the time, whereas Fielding's manner must have been formed long before. The style of Roderick Random is more easy and flowing than that of Tom Jones; the incidents follow one another more rapidly (though, it must be confessed, they never come in such a throng, or are brought out with the same dramatic effect); the humour is broader, and as effectual; and there is very nearly, if not quite, an equal interest excited by the story. What then is it that gives the superiority to Fielding? It is the superior insight into the springs of human character, and the constant developement of that character through every change of circumstance. Smollett's humour often arises from the situation of the persons, or the peculiarity of their external appearance; as, from Roderick Random's carrotty locks, which hung down over his shoulders like a pound of candles, or Strap's ignorance of London, and the blunders that follow from it. There is a tone of vulgarity about all his productions. The incidents frequently resemble detached anecdotes taken from a newspaper or magazine; and, like those in Gil Blas, might happen to a hundred other characters. He exhibits the ridiculous accidents and reverses to which human life is liable, not 'the stuff' of which it is composed. He seldom probes to the quick, or penetrates beyond the surface; and, therefore, he leaves no stings in the minds of his readers, and in this respect is far less interesting than Fielding. His novels always enliven, and never tire us: we take them up with pleasure, and lay them down without any strong feeling of regret. We look on and laugh, as spectators of a highly amusing scene, without closing in with the combatants, or being made parties in the event. We read Roderick Random as an entertaining story; for the particular accidents and modes of life which it describes have ceased to exist: but we regard Tom Jones as a real history; because the author never stops short of those essential principles which lie at the bottom of all our actions, and in which we feel an immediate interest—*intus et in cute*. Smollett excels most as the lively caricaturist: Fielding as the exact painter and profound metaphysician. I am far from maintaining that this account applies uniformly to the productions of these two writers; but I think that, as far as they essentially differ, what I have stated is the general distinction between them. Roderick Random is the purest of Smollett's novels: I mean in point of style and description. Most of the incidents and characters are supposed to have been taken from the events of his own life; and are, therefore, truer to nature. There is a rude conception of generosity in some of his characters, of which Fielding seems to have been incapable, his amiable persons being merely good-natured. It is owing to this that Strap is superior to Partridge; as there is a heartiness and warmth of feeling in some of the scenes between Lieutenant Bowling and his nephew, which is beyond Fielding's power of impassioned writing. The whole of the scene on ship-board is a most admirable and striking picture, and, I imagine, very little if at all exaggerated, though the interest it excites is of a very unpleasant kind, because the irritation and resistance to petty oppression can be of no avail. The picture of the little profligate French friar, who was Roderick's travelling companion, and of whom he always kept to the windward, is one of Smollett's most masterly sketches.—Peregrine Pickle is no great favourite of mine, and Launcelot Greaves was not worthy of the genius of the author.

Humphry Clinker and Count Fathom are both equally admirable in their way. Perhaps the former is the most pleasant gossiping novel that ever was written; that which gives the most pleasure with the least effort to the reader. It is quite as amusing as going the journey could have been; and we have just as good an idea of what happened on the road, as if we had been of the party. Humphry Clinker himself is exquisite; and his sweetheart, Winifred Jenkins, not much behind him. Matthew Bramble, though not altogether original, is excellently supported, and seems to have been the prototype of Sir Anthony Absolute in the Rivals. But Lismahago is the flower of the flock. His tenaciousness in argument is not so delightful as the relaxation of his logical severity, when he finds his fortune mellowing in the wintry smiles of Mrs. Tabitha Bramble. This is the best preserved, and most severe of all Smollett's characters. The resemblance to Don Quixote is only just enough to make it interesting to the critical reader, without giving offence to any body else. The indecency and filth in this novel, are what must be allowed to all Smollett's writings.—The subject and characters in Count Fathom are, in general, exceedingly disgusting: the story is also spun out to a degree of tediousness in the serious and sentimental parts; but there is more power of writing occasionally shewn in it than in any of his works. I need only to refer to the fine and bitter irony of the Count's address to the country of his ancestors on his landing in England; to the robber scene in the forest, which has never been surpassed; to the Parisian swindler who personates a raw English country squire (Western is tame in the comparison); and to the story of the seduction in the west of England. It would be difficult to point out, in any author, passages written with more force and mastery than these.

It is not a very difficult undertaking to class Fielding or Smollett;—the one as an observer of the characters of human life, the other as a describer of its various eccentricities. But it is by no means so easy to dispose of Richardson, who was neither an observer of the one, nor a describer of the other; but who seemed to spin his materials entirely out of his own brain, as if there had been nothing existing in the world beyond the little room in which he sat writing. There is an artificial reality about his works, which is no where else to be met with. They have the romantic air of a pure fiction, with the literal minuteness of a common diary. The author had the strongest matter-of-fact imagination that ever existed, and wrote the oddest mixture of poetry and prose. He does not appear to have taken advantage of any thing in actual nature, from one end of his works to the other; and yet, throughout all his works, voluminous as they are—(and this, to be sure, is one reason why they are so,)—he sets about describing every object and transaction, as if the whole had been given in on evidence by an eye-witness. This kind of high finishing from imagination is an anomaly in the history of human genius; and, certainly, nothing so fine was ever produced by the same accumulation of minute parts. There is not the least distraction, the least forgetfulness of the end: every circumstance is made to tell. I cannot agree that this exactness of detail produces heaviness: on the contrary, it gives an appearance of truth, and a positive interest to the story; and we listen with the same attention as we should to the particulars of a confidential communication. I at one time used to think some parts of Sir Charles Grandison rather trifling and tedious, especially the long description of Miss Harriet Byron's wedding clothes, till I was told of two young ladies who had severally copied out the whole of that very description for their own private gratification. After that, I could not blame the author.

The effect of reading this work is like an increase of kindred. You find yourself all of a sudden introduced into the midst of a large family, with aunts and cousins to the third and fourth generation, and grandmothers both by the father's and mother's side;—and a very odd set of people they are, but people whose real existence and personal identity you can no more dispute than your own senses, for you see and hear all that they do or say. What is still more extraordinary, all this extreme elaborateness in working out the story, seems to have cost the author nothing; for it is said, that the published works are mere abridgments. I have heard (though this I suspect must be a pleasant exaggeration) that Sir Charles Grandison was originally written in eight and twenty volumes.

Pamela is the first of Richardson's productions, and the very child of his brain. Taking the general idea of the character of a modest and beautiful country girl, and of the ordinary situation in which she is placed, he makes out all the rest, even to the smallest circumstance, by the mere force of a reasoning imagination. It would seem as if a step lost, would be as fatal here as in a mathematical demonstration. The developement of the character is the most simple, and comes the nearest to nature that it can do, without being the same thing. The interest of the story increases with the dawn of understanding and reflection in the heroine: her sentiments gradually expand themselves like opening flowers. She writes better every time, and acquires a confidence in herself, just as a girl would do, writing such letters in such circumstances; and yet it is certain *that no girl would write such letters in such circumstances.* What I mean is this:—Richardson's nature is always the nature of sentiment and reflection, not of impulse or situation. He furnishes his characters, on every occasion, with the presence of mind of the author. He makes them act, not as they would from the impulse of the moment, but as they might upon reflection, and upon a careful review of every motive and circumstance in their situation. They regularly sit down to write letters: and if the business of life consisted in letter-writing, and was carried on by the post (like a Spanish game at chess), human nature would be what Richardson represents it. All actual objects and feelings are blunted and deadened by being presented through a medium which may be true to reason, but is false in nature. He confounds his own point of view with that of the immediate actors in the scene; and hence presents you with a conventional and factitious nature, instead of that which is real. Dr. Johnson seems to have preferred this truth of reflection to the truth of nature, when he said that there was more knowledge of the human heart in a page of Richardson, than in all Fielding. Fielding, however, saw more of the practical results, and understood the principles as well; but he had not the same power of speculating upon their possible results, and combining them in certain ideal forms of passion and imagination, which was Richardson's real excellence.

It must be observed, however, that it is this mutual good understanding, and comparing of notes between the author and the persons he describes; his infinite circumspection, his exact process of ratiocination and calculation, which gives such an appearance of coldness and formality to most of his characters,—which makes prudes of his women, and coxcombs of his men. Every thing is too conscious in his works. Every thing is distinctly brought home to the mind of the actors in the scene, which is a fault undoubtedly: but then it must be confessed, every thing is brought home in its full force to the mind of the reader also; and we feel the same interest in the story as if it were our own. Can any thing be more beautiful or more affecting than Pamela's reproaches to her 'lumpish heart,' when she is sent away from her master's at her own request; its lightness, when she is sent for back; the joy which the conviction of the sincerity of his love diffuses in her heart, like the coming on of spring; the artifice of the stuff gown; the meeting with Lady Davers after her marriage; and the trial-scene with her husband? Who ever remained insensible to the passion of Lady Clementina, except Sir Charles Grandison himself, who was the object of it Clarissa is, however, his masterpiece, if we except Lovelace. If she is fine in herself, she is still finer in his account of her. With tha foil, her purity is dazzling indeed: and she who could triumph by her virtue, and the force of her love, over the regality of Lovelace’ mind, his wit, his person, his accomplishments, and his spirit conquers all hearts. I should suppose that never sympathy more deep or sincere was excited than by the heroine of Richardson’ romance, except by the calamities of real life. The links in thi wonderful chain of interest are not more finely wrought, than thei whole weight is overwhelming and irresistible. Who can forget the exquisite gradations of her long dying-scene, or the closing of the coffin-lid, when Miss Howe comes to take her last leave of he friend; or the heart-breaking reflection that Clarissa makes on wha was to have been her wedding-day? Well does a certain write exclaim—

‘Books are a real world, both pure and good,
Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness may grow!’

Richardson’s wit was unlike that of any other writer—his humour was so too. Both were the effect of intense activity of mind—laboured, and yet completely effectual. I might refer to Lovelace’s reception and description of Hickman, when he calls out Death in his ear, as the name of the person with whom Clarissa had fallen in love; and to the scene at the glove-shop. What can be more magnificent than his enumeration of his companions—‘Belton, so pert and so pimply—Tourville, so fair and so foppish!’ &c. In casuistry this author is quite at home; and, with a boldness greater even than his puritanical severity, has exhausted every topic on virtue and vice. There is another peculiarity in Richardson, not perhaps so uncommon, which is, his systematically preferring his most insipid characters to his finest, though both were equally his own invention, and he must be supposed to have understood something of their qualities. Thus he preferred the little, selfish, affected, insignificant Miss Byron, to the divine Clementina; and again, Sir Charles Grandison, to the nobler Lovelace. I have nothing to say in favour of Lovelace’s morality; but Sir Charles is the prince of coxcombs,—whose eye was never once taken from his own person, and his own virtues; and there is nothing which excites so little sympathy as this excessive egotism.

It remains to speak of Sterne; and I shall do it in few words. There is more of *mannerism* and affectation in him, and a more mmediate reference to preceding authors; but his excellences, where he is excellent, are of the first order. His characters are intellectual and inventive, like Richardson's; but totally opposite in the execution. The one are made out by continuity, and patient repetition of touches: the others, by glancing transitions and graceful apposition. His style is equally different from Richardson's: it is at times the most rapid, the most happy, the most idiomatic of any that is to be found. It is the pure essence of English conversational style. His works consist only of *morceaux*—of brilliant passages. I wonder that Goldsmith, who ought to have known better, should call him 'a dull fellow.' His wit is poignant, though artificial; and his characters (though the groundwork of some of them had been laid before) have yet invaluable original differences; and the spirit of the execution, the master-strokes constantly thrown into them, are not to be surpassed. It is sufficient to name them;—Yorick, Dr. Slop, Mr. Shandy, My Uncle Toby, Trim, Susanna, and the Widow Wadman. In these he has contrived to oppose, with equal felicity and originality, two characters, one of pure intellect, and the other of pure good nature, in My Father and My Uncle Toby. There appears to have been in Sterne a vein of dry, sarcastic humour, and of extreme tenderness of feeling; the latter sometimes carried to affectation, as in the tale of Maria, and the apostrophe to the recording angel: but at other times pure, and without blemish. The story of Le Fevre is perhaps the finest in the English language. My Father's restlessness, both of body and mind, is inimitable. It is the model from which all those despicable performances against modern philosophy ought to have been copied, if their authors had known any thing of the subject they were writing about. My Uncle Toby is one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature. He is the most unoffending of God's creatures; or, as the French express it, *un tel petit bon homme*! Of his bowling-green, his sieges, and his amours, who would say or think any thing amiss!

It is remarkable that our four best novel-writers belong nearly to the same age. We also owe to the same period (the reign of George II.) the inimitable Hogarth, and some of our best writers of the middle style of comedy. If I were called upon to account for this coincidence, I should wave the consideration of more general causes, and ascribe it at once to the establishment of the Protestant ascendancy, and the succession of the House of Hanover. These great events appear to have given a more popular turn to our literature and genius, as well as to our government. It was found high time that the people should be represented in books as well as in Parliament. They wished to see some account of themselves in what they read; and not to be confined always to the vices, the miseries, an frivolities of the great. Our domestic tragedy, and our earlies periodical works, appeared a little before the same period. I despotic countries, human nature is not of sufficient importance to b studied or described. The *canaille* are objects rather of disgust tha curiosity; and there are no middle classes. The works of Racin and Moliere are either imitations of the verbiage of the court, befor which they were represented, or fanciful caricatures of the manners o the lowest of the people. But in the period of our history in question a security of person and property, and a freedom of opinion had bee established, which made every man feel of some consequence to him self, and appear an object of some curiosity to his neighbours: ou manners became more domesticated; there was a general spirit o sturdiness and independence, which made the English character more truly English than perhaps at any other period—that is, more tenacious of its own opinions and purposes. The whole surface o society appeared cut out into square enclosures and sharp angles, which extended to the dresses of the time, their gravel-walks, and clipped hedges. Each individual had a certain ground-plot of his own to cultivate his particular humours in, and let them shoot out a pleasure; and a most plentiful crop they have produced accordingly. The reign of George II. was, in a word, the age of *hobby-horses*: but, since that period, things have taken a different turn.

His present Majesty (God save the mark!) during almost the whole of his reign, has been constantly mounted on a great war-horse; and has fairly driven all competitors out of the field. Instead o minding our own affairs, or laughing at each other, the eyes of all his faithful subjects have been fixed on the career of the sovereign, and all hearts anxious for the safety of his person and government. Ou pens and our swords have been alike drawn in their defence; and the returns of killed and wounded, the manufacture of newspapers an parliamentary speeches, have exceeded all former example. If we have had little of the blessings of peace, we have had enough of the glories and calamities of war. His Majesty has indeed contrived t keep alive the greatest public interest ever known, by his determine manner of riding his hobby for half a century together, with the aristocracy, the democracy, the clergy, the landed and monie interest, and the rabble, in full cry after him;—and at the end of hi career, most happily and unexpectedly succeeded, amidst empire lost and won, kingdoms overturned and created, and the destructio of an incredible number of lives, in restoring *the divine right of kings* and thus preventing any future abuse of the example which seated hi family on the throne!

It is not to be wondered at, if amidst the tumult of events crowded into this period, our literature has partaken of the disorder of the time; if our prose has run mad, and our poetry grown childish. Among those persons who 'have kept the even tenor of their way,' the author of Evelina, Cecilia, and Camilla, must be allowed to hold a distinguished place.[1] Mrs. Radcliffe's 'enchantments drear,' and mouldering castles, derived part of their interest, no doubt, from the supposed tottering state of all old structures at the time; and Mrs. Inchbald's 'Nature and Art' would scarcely have had the same popularity, but that it fell in (as to its two main characters) with the prevailing prejudice of the moment, that judges and bishops were not invariably pure abstractions of justice and piety. Miss Edgeworth's Tales again (with the exception of Castle Rack-rent, which is a genuine, unsophisticated, national portrait) are a kind of pedantic, pragmatical common sense, tinctured with the pertness and pretensions of the paradoxes to which they are so self-complacently opposed. Madame D'Arblay is, on the contrary, quite of the old school, a mere common observer of manners, and also a very woman. It is this last circumstance which forms the peculiarity of her writings, and distinguishes them from those masterpieces which I have before mentioned. She is a quick, lively, and accurate observer of persons and things; but she always looks at them with a consciousness of her sex, and in that point of view in which it is the particular business and interest of women to observe them. There is little in her works of passion or character, or even manners, in the most extended sense of the word, as implying the sum-total of our habits and pursuits; her *forte* is in describing the absurdities and affectations of external behaviour, or *the manners of people in company*. Her characters, which are ingenious caricatures, are, no doubt, distinctly marked, and well kept up; but they are slightly shaded, and exceedingly uniform. Her heroes and heroines, almost all of them, depend on the stock of a single phrase or sentiment, and have certain mottoes or devices by which they may always be known. They form such characters as people might be supposed to assume for a night at a masquerade. She presents, not the whole-length figure, nor even the face, but some prominent feature. In one of her novels, for example, a lady appears regularly every ten pages, to get a lesson in music for nothing. She never appears for any other purpose; this is all you know of her; and in this the whole wit and humour of the character consists. Meadows is the same, who has always the cue of being tired, without any other idea. It has been said of Shakspeare, that you may always assign his speeches to the proper characters;—and you may infallibly do the same thing with Madame D'Arblay's, for they always say the same thing. The Branghtons are the best. Mr Smith is an exquisite city portrait. Evelina is also her best novel because it is the shortest; that is, it has all the liveliness in the sketches of character, and smartness of common dialogue and repartee without the tediousness of the story, and endless affectation of sentiment which disfigures the others.

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[1] The Fool of Quality, David Simple, and Sidney Biddulph, written about the middle of the last century, belong to the ancient *regime* of novel-writing. Of the Vicar of Wakefield I have attempted a character elsewhere.

Women, in general, have a quicker perception of any oddity or singularity of character than men, and are more alive to every absurdity which arises from a violation of the rules of society, or a deviation from established custom. This partly arises from the restraints on their own behaviour, which turn their attention constantly on the subject, and partly from other causes. The surface of their minds, like that of their bodies, seems of a finer texture than ours; more soft, and susceptible of immediate impulses. They have less muscular strength; less power of continued voluntary attention—of reason, passion, and imagination: but they are more easily impressed with whatever appeals to their senses or habitual prejudices. The intuitive perception of their minds is less disturbed by any abstruse reasonings on causes or consequences. They learn the idiom of character and manners, as they acquire that of language, by rote, without troubling themselves about the principles. Their observation is not the less accurate on that account, as far as it goes; for it has been well said, that 'there is nothing so true as habit.'

There is little other power in Miss Burney's novels, than that of immediate observation: her characters, whether of refinement or vulgarity, are equally superficial and confined. The whole is a question of form, whether that form is adhered to or infringed upon. It is this circumstance which takes away dignity and interest from her story and sentiments, and makes the one so teazing and tedious, and the other so insipid. The difficulties in which she involves her heroines are too much 'Female Difficulties'; they are difficulties created out of nothing. The author appears to have no other idea of refinement than that it is the reverse of vulgarity; but the reverse of vulgarity is fastidiousness and affectation. There is a true and a false delicacy. Because a vulgar country Miss would answer 'yes' to a proposal of marriage in the first page, Madame D'Arblay makes it a proof of an excess of refinement, and an indispensable point of etiquette in her young ladies, to postpone the answer to the end of five volumes, without the smallest reason for their doing so, and with every reason to the contrary. The reader is led every moment to expect a *denouement*, and is as often disappointed on some trifling pretext. The whole artifice of her fable consists in coming to no conclusion. Her ladies 'stand so upon the order of their going,' that they do not go at all. They will not abate an ace of their punctilio in any circumstances, or on any emergency. They would consider it as quite indecorous to run down stairs though the house were in flames, or to move an inch off the pavement though a scaffolding was falling. She has formed to herself an abstract idea of perfection in common behaviour, which is quite as romantic and impracticable as any other idea of the sort: and the consequence has naturally been, that she makes her heroines commit the greatest improprieties and absurdities in order to avoid the smallest. In opposition to a maxim in philosophy, they constantly act from the weakest motive, or rather from pure contradiction. The whole tissue of the fable is, in general, more wild and chimerical than any thing in Don Quixote, without the poetical truth or elevation. Madame D'Arblay has woven a web of difficulties for her heroines, something like the green silken threads in which the shepherdesses entangled the steed of Cervantes's hero, who swore, in his fine enthusiastic way, that he would sooner cut his passage to another world than disturb the least of those beautiful meshes. To mention the most painful instance—the Wanderer, in her last novel, raises obstacles, lighter than 'the gossamer that idles in the wanton summer air,' into insurmountable barriers; and trifles with those that arise out of common sense, reason, and necessity. Her conduct is not to be accounted for directly out of the circumstances in which she is placed, but out of some factitious and misplaced refinement on them. It is a perpetual game at cross-purposes. There being a plain and strong motive why she should pursue any course of action, is a sufficient reason for her to avoid it; and the perversity of her conduct is in proportion to its levity—as the lightness of the feather baffles the force of the impulse that is given to it, and the slightest breath of air turns it back on the hand from which it is thrown. We can hardly consider this as the perfection of the female character!

I must say I like Mrs. Radcliffe's romances better, and think of them oftener;—and even when I do not, part of the impression with which I survey the full-orbed moon shining in the blue expanse of heaven, or hear the wind sighing through autumnal leaves, or walk under the echoing archways of a Gothic ruin, is owing to a repeated perusal of the Romance of the Forest and the Mysteries of Udolpho. Her descriptions of scenery, indeed, are vague and wordy to the last degree; they are neither like Salvator nor Claude, nor nature nor art; and she dwells on the effects of moonlight till we are sometimes weary of them: her characters are insipid, the shadows of a shade, continued on, under different names, through all her novels: her story comes to nothing. But in harrowing up the soul with imaginary horrors, and making the flesh creep, and the nerves thrill, with fond hopes and fears, she is unrivalled among her fair country-women. Her great power lies in describing the indefinable, and embodying a phantom. She makes her readers twice children: and from the dim and shadowy veil which she draws over the objects of her fancy, forces us to believe all that is strange, and next to impossible, of their mysterious agency:—whether it is the sound of the lover's lute borne o'er the distant waters along the winding shores of Provence, recalling, with its magic breath, some long-lost friendship, or some hopeless love; or the full choir of the cloistered monks, chaunting their midnight orgies, or the lonely voice of an unhappy sister in her pensive cell, like angels' whispered music; or the deep sigh that steals from a dungeon on the startled ear; or the dim apparition of ghastly features; or the face of an assassin hid beneath a monk's cowl; or the robber gliding through the twilight gloom of the forest. All the fascination that links the world of passion to the world unknown, is hers, and she plays with it at her pleasure: she has all the poetry of romance, all that is obscure, visionary, and objectless, in the imagination. It seems that the simple notes of Clara's lute, which so delighted her youthful heart, still echo among the rocks and mountains of the Valois; the mellow tones of the minstrel's songs still mingle with the noise of the dashing oar, and the rippling of the silver waves of the Mediterranean; the voice of Agnes is heard from the haunted tower; and Schedoni's form still stalks through the frowning ruins of Palinzi. The greatest treat, however, which Mrs. Radcliffe's pen has provided for the lovers of the marvellous and terrible, is the Provençal tale which Ludovico reads in the Castle of Udolpho, as the lights are beginning to burn blue, and just before the faces appear from behind the tapestry that carry him off, and we hear no more of him. This tale is of a knight, who being engaged in a dance at some high festival of old romance, was summoned out by another knight clad in complete steel; and being solemnly adjured to follow him into the mazes of the neighbouring wood, his conductor brought him at length to a hollow glade in the thickest part, where he pointed to the murdered corse of another knight, and lifting up his beaver, shewed him by the gleam of moonlight which fell on it, that it had the face of his spectre-guide! The dramatic power in the character of Schedoni, the Italian monk, has been much admired and praised; but the effect does not depend upon the character, but the situations;

not upon the figure, but upon the back-ground.—The Castle of Otranto (which is supposed to have led the way to this style of writing) is, to my notion, dry, meagre, and without effect. It is done upon false principles of taste. The great hand and arm, which are thrust into the court-yard, and remain there all day long, are the pasteboard machinery of a pantomime; they shock the senses, and have no purchase upon the imagination. They are a matter-of-fact impossibility; a fixture, and no longer a phantom. *Quod sic mihi ostendis, incredulus odi.* By realising the chimeras of ignorance and fear, begot upon shadows and dim likenesses, we take away the very grounds of credulity and superstition; and, as in other cases, by facing out the imposture, betray the secret to the contempt and laughter of the spectators. The Recess and the Old English Baron are also 'dismal treatises,' but with little in them 'at which our fell of hair is likely to rouse and stir as life were in it.' They are dull and prosing, without the spirit of fiction, or the air of tradition to make them interesting. After Mrs. Radcliffe, Monk Lewis was the greatest master of the art of freezing the blood. The robber-scene in the Monk is only inferior to that in Count Fathom, and perfectly new in the circumstances and cast of the characters. Some of his descriptions are chargeable with unpardonable grossness, but the pieces of poetry interspersed in this far-famed novel, such as the fight of Ronscevalles and the Exile, in particular, have a romantic and delightful harmony, such as might be chaunted by the moonlight pilgrim, or might lull the dreaming mariner on summer-seas.

If Mrs. Radcliffe touched the trembling chords of the imagination, making wild music there, Mrs. Inchbald has no less power over the springs of the heart. She not only moves the affections, but melts us into 'all the luxury of woe.' Her 'Nature and Art' is one of the most pathetic and interesting stories in the world. It is, indeed, too much so; or the distress is too naked, and the situations hardly to be borne with patience. I think nothing, however, can exceed in delicacy and beauty the account of the love-letter which the poor girl, who is the subject of the story, receives from her lover, and which she is a fortnight in spelling out, sooner than shew it to any one else; nor the dreadful catastrophe of the last fatal scene, in which the same poor creature, as her former seducer, now become her judge, is about to pronounce sentence of death upon her, cries out in agony—'Oh, not from you!' The effect of this novel upon the feelings, is not only of the most distressing, but withering kind. It blights the sentiments, and haunts the memory. The Simple Story is not much better in this respect: the gloom, however, which hangs over it, is of a more fixed and tender kind: we are not now lifted to ecstacy, only to be plunged in madness; and besides the sweetness and dignity of some of the characters, there are redeeming traits, retrospective glances on the course of human life, which brighten the backward stream, and smile in hope or patience to the last. Such is the account of Sandford, her stern and inflexible adviser, sitting by the bedside of Miss Miller, and comforting her in her dying moments; thus softening the worst pang of human nature, and reconciling us to the best, but not most shining virtues in human character. The conclusion of Nature and Art, on the contrary, is a scene of heartless desolation, which must effectually deter any one from ever reading the book twice. Mrs. Inchbald is an instance to confute the assertion of Rousseau, that women fail whenever they attempt to describe the passion of love.

I shall conclude this Lecture, by saying a few words of the author of Caleb Williams, and the author of Waverley. I shall speak of the last first. In knowledge, in variety, in facility, in truth of painting, in costume and scenery, in freshness of subject and in untired interest, in glancing lights and the graces of a style passing at will from grave to gay, from lively to severe, at once romantic and familiar, having the utmost force of imitation and apparent freedom of invention; these novels have the highest claims to admiration. What lack they yet? The author has all power given him from without—he has not, perhaps, an equal power from within. The intensity of the feeling is not equal to the distinctness of the imagery. He sits like a magician in his cell, and conjures up all shapes and sights to the view; and with a little variation we might apply to him what Spenser says of Fancy:—

'His chamber was dispainted all within
With sundry colours, in the which were writ
Infinite shapes of things dispersed thin;
Some such as in the world were never yet;
Some daily seen and knowen by their names,
Such as in idle fantasies do flit;
Infernal hags, centaurs, fiends, hippodames,
Apes, lions, eagles, owls, fools, lovers, children, dames.'

In the midst of all this phantasmagoria, the author himself never appears to take part with his characters, to prompt our affection to the good, or sharpen our antipathy to the bad. It is the perfection of art to conceal art; and this is here done so completely, that while it adds to our pleasure in the work, it seems to take away from the merit of the author. As he does not thrust himself forward in the foreground, he loses the credit of the performance. The copies are so true to nature, that they appear like tapestry figures taken off by the pattern; the obvious patchwork of tradition and history. His characters are transplanted at once from their native soil to the page which we are reading, without any traces of their having passed through the hot-bed of the author's genius or vanity. He leaves them as he found them; but this is doing wonders. The Laird and the Baillie of Bradwardine, the idiot rhymer David Gellatly, Miss Rose Bradwardine, and Miss Flora Mac Ivor, her brother the Highland Jacobite chieftain, Vich Ian Vohr, the Highland rover, Donald Bean Lean, and the worthy page Callum Beg, Bothwell, and Balfour of Burley, Claverhouse and Macbriar, Elshie, the Black Dwarf, and the Red Reever of Westburn Flat, Hobbie and Grace Armstrong, Ellen Gowan and Dominie Sampson, Dirk Hatteraick and Meg Merrilees, are at present 'familiar in our mouths as household names,' and whether they are actual persons or creations of the poet's pen, is an impertinent inquiry. The picturesque and local scenery is as fresh as the lichen on the rock: the characters are a part of the scenery. If they are put in action, it is a moving picture: if they speak, we hear their dialect and the tones of their voice. If the humour is made out by dialect, the character by the dress, the interest by the facts and documents in the author's possession, we have no right to complain, if it is made out; but sometimes it hardly is, and then we have a right to say so. For instance, in the Tales of my Landlord, Canny Elshie is not in himself so formidable or petrific a person as the real Black Dwarf, called David Ritchie, nor are his acts or sayings so staggering to the imagination. Again, the first introduction of this extraordinary personage, groping about among the hoary twilight ruins of the Witch of Micklestane Moor and her Grey Geese, is as full of preternatural power and bewildering effect (according to the tradition of the country) as can be; while the last decisive scene, where the Dwarf, in his resumed character of Sir Edward Mauley, comes from the tomb in the chapel, to prevent the forced marriage of the daughter of his former betrothed mistress with the man she abhors, is altogether powerless and tame. No situation could be imagined more finely calculated to call forth an author's powers of imagination and passion; but nothing is done. The assembly is dispersed under circumstances of the strongest natural feeling, and the most appalling preternatural appearances, just as if the effect had been produced by a peace-officer entering for the same purpose. These instances of a falling off are, however, rare; and if this author should not be supposed by fastidious critics to have original genius in the highest degree, he has other qualities which supply its place so well, his materials are so rich and varied, and he uses them so lavishly, that the reader is no loser by the exchange. We are not in fear that he should publish another novel; we are under no apprehension of his exhausting himself, for he has shewn that he is inexhaustible.

Whoever else is, it is pretty clear that the author of Caleb Williams and St. Leon is not the author of Waverley. Nothing can be more distinct or excellent in their several ways than these two writers. If the one owes almost every thing to external observation and traditional character, the other owes every thing to internal conception and contemplation of the possible workings of the human mind. There is little knowledge of the world, little variety, neither an eye for the picturesque, nor a talent for the humorous in Caleb Williams, for instance, but you cannot doubt for a moment of the originality of the work and the force of the conception. The impression made upon the reader is the exact measure of the strength of the author's genius. For the effect, both in Caleb Williams and St. Leon, is entirely made out, neither by facts, nor dates, by black-letter or magazine learning, by transcript nor record, but by intense and patient study of the human heart, and by an imagination projecting itself into certain situations, and capable of working up its imaginary feelings to the height of reality. The author launches into the ideal world, and must sustain himself and the reader there by the mere force of imagination. The sense of power in the writer thus adds to the interest of the subject.—The character of Falkland is a sort of apotheosis of the love of fame. The gay, the gallant Falkland lives only in the good opinion of good men; for this he adorns his soul with virtue, and tarnishes it with crime; he lives only for this, and dies as he loses it. He is a lover of virtue, but a worshipper of fame. Stung to madness by a brutal insult, he avenges himself by a crime of the deepest die, and the remorse of his conscience and the stain upon his honour prey upon his peace and reason ever after. It was into the mouth of such a character that a modern poet has well put the words,

'—— Action is momentary,
The motion of a muscle, this way or that;
Suffering is long, obscure, and infinite.'

In the conflict of his feelings, he is worn to a skeleton, wasted to a shadow. But he endures this living death to watch over his undying reputation, and to preserve his name unsullied and free from suspicion. But he is at last disappointed in this his darling object, by the very means he takes to secure it, and by harassing and goading Caleb Williams (whose insatiable, incessant curiosity had wormed itself into his confidence) to a state of desperation, by employing every sort of persecution, and by trying to hunt him from society like an infection, makes him turn upon him, and betray the inmost secret of his soul. The last moments of Falkland are indeed sublime: the spark of life and the hope of imperishable renown are extinguished in him together; and bending his last look of forgiveness on his victim and destroyer, he dies a martyr to fame, but a confessor at the shrine of virtue! The re-action and play of these two characters into each other's hands (like Othello and Iago) is inimitably well managed, and on a par with any thing in the dramatic art; but Falkland is the hero of the story, Caleb Williams is only the instrument of it. This novel is utterly unlike any thing else that ever was written, and is one of the most original as well as powerful productions in the English language.—St. Leon is not equal to it in the plot and ground-work, though perhaps superior in the execution. In the one Mr. Godwin has hit upon the extreme point of the perfectly natural and perfectly new; in the other he ventures into the preternatural world, and comes nearer to the world of common place. Still the character is of the same exalted intellectual kind. As the ruling passion of the one was the love of fame, so in the other the sole business of life is thought. Raised by the fatal discovery of the philosopher's stone above mortality, he is cut off from all participation with its pleasures. He is a limb torn from society. In possession of eternal youth and beauty, he can feel no love; surrounded, tantalized, tormented with riches, he can do no good. The races of men pass before him as in a *speculum*; but he is attached to them by no common tie of sympathy or suffering. He is thrown back into himself and his own thoughts. He lives in the solitude of his own breast,—without wife or child, or friend, or enemy in the world. His is the solitude of the soul,—not of woods, or seas, or mountains,—but the desart of society, the waste and desolation of the heart. He is himself alone. His existence is purely contemplative, and is therefore intolerable to one who has felt the rapture of affection or the anguish of woe. The contrast between the enthusiastic eagerness of human pursuits and their blank disappointment, was never, perhaps, more finely pourtrayed than in this novel. Marguerite, the wife of St. Leon, is an instance of pure and disinterested affection in one of the noblest of her sex. It is not improbable that the author found the model of this character in nature.—Of Mandeville, I shall say only one word. It appears to me to be a falling off in the subject, not in the ability. The style and declamation are even more powerful than ever. But unless an author surpasses himself, and surprises the public as much the fourth or fifth time as he did the first, he is said to fall off, because there is not the same stimulus of novelty. A great deal is here made out of nothing, or out of a very disagreeable subject. I cannot agree that the story is out of nature. The feeling is very common indeed; though carried to an unusual and improbable excess, or to one with which from the individuality and minuteness of the circumstances, we cannot readily sympathise.

It is rare that a philosopher is a writer of romances. The union of the two characters in this author is a sort of phenomenon in the history of letters; for I cannot but consider the author of Political Justice as a philosophical reasoner of no ordinary stamp or pretensions. That work, whatever its defects may be, is distinguished by the most acute and severe logic, and by the utmost boldness of thinking, founded on a love and conviction of truth. It is a system of ethics, and one that, though I think it erroneous myself, is built on following up into its fair consequences, a very common and acknowledged principle, that abstract reason and general utility are the only test and standard of moral rectitude. If this principle is true, then the system is true: but I think that Mr. Godwin's book has done more than any thing else to overturn the sufficiency of this principle by abstracting, in a strict metaphysical process, the influence of reason or the understanding in moral questions and relations from that of habit, sense, association, local and personal attachment, natural affection, &c.; and by thus making it appear how necessary the latter are to our limited, imperfect, and mixed being, how impossible the former as an exclusive guide of action, unless man were, or were capable of becoming, a purely intellectual being. Reason is no doubt one faculty of the human mind, and the chief gift of Providence to man; but it must itself be subject to and modified by other instincts and principles, because it is not the only one. This work then, even supposing it to be false, is invaluable as demonstrating an important truth by the *reductio ad absurdum*; or it is an *experimentum crucis* in one of the grand and trying questions of moral philosophy.—In delineating the character and feelings of the hermetic philosopher St. Leon, perhaps the author had not far to go from those of a speculative philosophical Recluse. He who deals in the secrets of magic, or in the secrets of the human mind, is too often looked upon with jealous eyes by the world, which is no great conjuror; he who pours out his intellectual wealth into the lap of the public, is hated by those who cannot understand how he came by it; he who thinks beyond his age, cannot expect the feelings of his contemporaries to go along with him; he whose mind is of no age or country, is seldom properly recognised during his life-time, and must wait, in order to have justice done him, for the late but lasting award of posterity:—'Where his treasure is, there his heart is also.'

LECTURE VII

ON THE WORKS OF HOGARTH.—ON THE GRAND AND FAMILIAR STYLE OF PAINTING

If the quantity of amusement, or of matter for more serious reflection which their works have afforded, is that by which we are to judge of precedence among the intellectual benefactors of mankind, there are, perhaps, few persons who can put in a stronger claim to our gratitude than Hogarth. It is not hazarding too much to assert, that he was one of the greatest comic geniuses that ever lived, and he was certainly one of the most extraordinary men this country has produced. The wonderful knowledge which he possessed of human life and manners, is only to be surpassed (if it can be) by the power of invention with which he has combined and contrasted his materials in the most ludicrous and varied points of view, and by the mastery of execution with which he has embodied and made tangible the very thoughts and passing movements of the mind. Critics sometimes object to the style of Hogarth's pictures, or to the class to which they belong. First, he belongs to no class, or if he does, it is to the same class as Fielding, Smollett, Vanbrugh, and Moliere. Besides, the merit of his pictures does not depend on the nature of the subject, but on the knowledge displayed of it, on the number of ideas they excite, on the fund of thought and observation contained in them. They are to be studied as works of science as well as of amusement; they satisfy our love of truth; they fill up the void in the mind; they form a series of plates in natural history, and of that most interesting part of natural history, the history of our own species. Make what deductions you please for the vulgarity of the subject, yet in the research, the profundity, the absolute truth and precision of the delineation of character; in the invention of incident, in wit and humour; in the life with which they are 'instinct in every part;' in everlasting variety and originality; they never have, and probably never will be surpassed. They stimulate the faculties as well as soothe them. 'Other pictures we see, Hogarth's we read.'

The public had not long ago an opportunity of viewing most of Hogarth's pictures, in the collection made of them at the British Gallery. The superiority of the original paintings to the common prints, is in a great measure confined to the Marriage a-la-Mode, with which I shall begin my remarks.

Boccaccio, the most refined and sentimental of all the novel-writers, has been stigmatised as a mere inventor of licentious tales, because readers in general have only seized on those things in his works which were suited to their own taste, and have thus reflected their own grossness back upon the writer. So it has happened, that the majority of critics having been most struck with the strong and decided expression in Hogarth, the extreme delicacy and subtle gradations of character in his pictures have almost entirely escaped them. In the first picture of the *Marriage a-la-Mode*, the three figures of the young Nobleman, his intended Bride, and her Inamorato, the Lawyer, shew how much Hogarth excelled in the power of giving soft and effeminate expression. They have, however, been less noticed than the other figures, which tell a plainer story, and convey a more palpable moral. Nothing can be more finely managed than the differences of character in these delicate personages. The beau sits smiling at the looking-glass with a reflected simper of self-admiration, and a languishing inclination of the head, while the rest of his body is perked up on his high heels with a certain air of tip-toe elevation. He is the Narcissus of the reign of George II.; whose powdered peruke, ruffles, gold-lace, and patches, divide his self-love unequally with his own person—the true *Sir Plume* of his day;

'Of amber-lidded snuff box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane.'

Again we find the same felicity in the figure and attitude of the Bride, courted by the Lawyer. There is the utmost flexibility, and yielding softness in her whole person, a listless languor and tremulous suspense in the expression of her face. It is the precise look and air which Pope has given to his favourite Belinda, just at the moment of the *Rape of the Lock*. The heightened glow, the forward intelligence, and loosened soul of love in the same face, in the Assignation scene before the masquerade, form a fine and instructive contrast to the delicacy, timidity, and coy reluctance expressed in the first. The Lawyer in both pictures is much the same, perhaps too much so; though even this unmoved, unaltered appearance may be designed as characteristic. In both cases he has 'a person, and a smooth dispose, framed to make women false.' He is full of that easy good-humour, and easy good opinion of himself, with which the sex are often delighted. There is not a sharp angle in his face to obstruct his success, or give a hint of doubt or difficulty. His whole aspect is round and rosy, lively and unmeaning, happy without the least expense of thought, careless and inviting; and conveys a perfect idea of the uninterrupted glide and pleasing murmur of the soft periods that flow from his tongue.

The expression of the Bride in the Morning Scene is the most highly seasoned, and at the same time the most vulgar in the series. The figure, face, and attitude of the husband, are inimitable. Hogarth has with great skill contrasted the pale countenance of the husband with the yellow whitish colour of the marble chimney-piece behind him, in such a manner as to preserve the fleshy tone of the former. The airy splendour of the view of the inner-room in this picture is probably not exceeded by any of the productions of the Flemish school.

The young girl in the third picture, who is represented as the victim of fashionable profligacy, is unquestionably one of the artist's *chef-d'œuvres.* The exquisite delicacy of the painting is only surpassed by the felicity and subtlety of the conception. Nothing can be more striking than the contrast between the extreme softness of her person, and the hardened indifference of her character. The vacant stillness, the docility to vice, the premature suppression of youthful sensibility, the doll-like mechanism of the whole figure, which seems to have no other feeling but a sickly sense of pain—shew the deepest insight into human nature, and into the effects of those refinements in depravity, by which it has been good-naturedly asserted, that 'vice loses half its evil in losing all its grossness.' The story of this picture is in some parts very obscure and enigmatical. It is certain that the nobleman is not looking strait forward to the quack, whom he seems to have been threatening with his cane; but that his eyes are turned up with an ironical leer of triumph to the procuress. The commanding attitude and size of this woman, the swelling circumference of her dress, spread out like a turkey-cock's feathers, the fierce, ungovernable, inveterate malignity of her countenance, which hardly needs the comment of the clasp-knife to explain her purpose, all are admirable in themselves, and still more so, as they are opposed to the mute insensibility, the elegant negligence of dress, and the childish figure of the girl who is supposed to be her *protegée.*—As for the Quack, there can be no doubt entertained about him. His face seems as if it were composed of salve, and his features exhibit all the chaos or confusion of the most gross, ignorant, and impudent empiricism. The gradations of ridiculous affectation in the Music scene are finely imagined and preserved. The preposterous, overstrained admiration of the lady of quality; the sentimental, insipid, patient delight of the man, with his hair in papers, and sipping his tea: the pert, smirking, conceited, half-distorted approbation of the figure next to him; the transition to the total insensibility of the round face in profile, and then to the wonder of the negro-boy at the rapture of his mistress, form a perfect whole. The sanguine complexion and flame-coloured hair of the female virtuoso throw an additional light on the character. This is lost in the print. The continuing the red colour of the hair into the back of the chair, has been pointed out as one of those instances of what may be termed alliteration in colouring, of which these pictures are every where full. The gross bloated appearance of the Italian singer is well relieved by the hard features of the instrumental performer behind him, which might be carved of wood. The negro-boy holding the chocolate, both in expression, colour, and execution, is a masterpiece. The gay, lively derision of the other negro-boy playing with the Acteon, is an ingenious contrast to the profound amazement of the first. Some account has already been given of the two lovers in this picture. It is curious to observe the infinite activity of mind which the artist displays on every occasion. An instance occurs in the present picture. He has so contrived the papers in the hair of the bride, as to make them look almost like a wreath of half-blown flowers; while those which he has placed on the head of the musical amateur, very much resemble a *cheveux-de-fris* of horns, which adorn and fortify the lack lustre expression, and mild resignation of the face beneath.

The Night Scene is inferior to the rest of the series. The attitude of the husband, who is just killed, is one in which it would be impossible for him to stand or even to fall. It resembles the loose pasteboard figures they make for children. The characters in the last picture, in which the wife dies, are all masterly. I would particularly refer to the captious, petulant, self-sufficiency of the Apothecary, whose face and figure are constructed on exact physiognomical principles; and to the fine example of passive obedience and non-resistance in the servant, whom he is taking to task, and whose coat, of green and yellow livery, is as long and as melancholy as his face. The disconsolate look and haggard eyes, the open mouth, the comb sticking in the hair, the broken gapped teeth, which, as it were, hitch in an answer, every thing about him denotes the utmost perplexity and dismay. The harmony and gradations of colour in this picture are uniformly preserved with the greatest nicety, and are well worthy the attention of the artist.—I have so far attempted to point out the fund of observation, physical and moral, contained in one set of these pictures, the *Marriage-a-la-Mode*. The rest would furnish as many topics to descant upon, were the patience of the reader as inexhaustible as the painter's invention. But as this is not the case, I shall content myself with barely referring to some of those figures in the other pictures, which appear to me the most striking, and which we see not only while we are looking at them, but which we have before us at all other times. For instance, who, having seen, can easily forget that exquisite frost-piece of religion and morality, the antiquated Prude in the Morning Scene; or that striking commentary on the *good old times*, the little wretched appendage of a Foot-boy, who crawls, half famished and half frozen, behind her? The French man and woman in the Noon, are the perfection of flighty affectation and studied grimace; the amiable *fraternization* of the two old women saluting each other, is not enough to be admired; and in the little Master, in the same national group, we see the early promise and personification of that eternal principle of wondrous self-complacency, proof against all circumstances, and which makes the French the only people who are vain even of being cuckolded and being conquered! Or shall we prefer to this the outraged distress and unmitigated terrors of the Boy who has dropped his dish of meat, and who seems red all over with shame and vexation, and bursting with the noise he makes? Or what can be better than the good housewifery of the Girl underneath, who is devouring the lucky fragments; or than the plump, ripe, florid, luscious look of the Servant-wench near her, embraced by a greasy rascal of an Othello, with her pye-dish tottering like her virtue, and with the most precious part of its contents running over? Just—no, not quite—as good is the joke of the Woman overhead, who, having quarrelled with her Husband, is throwing their Sunday's dinner out of the window, to complete this chapter of accidents of baked-dishes. The Husband in the Evening Scene is certainly as meek as any recorded in history; but I cannot say that I admire this picture, or the Night Scene after it. But then, in the Taste in High-Life, there is that inimitable pair, differing only in sex, congratulating and delighting one another by 'all the mutually reflected charities' of folly and affectation, with the young Lady, coloured like a rose, dandling her little, black, pug-faced, white-teethed, chuckling favourite; and with the portrait of Monsieur Des Noyers in the back-ground, dancing in a grand ballet, surrounded by butterflies. And again, in the Election Dinner, is the immortal Cobbler, surrounded by his Peers, who,

> '—— frequent and full,
> In *loud* recess and *brawling* conclave sit'——

the Jew in the second picture, a very Jew in grain; innumerable fine sketches of heads in the Polling for Votes, of which the Nobleman overlooking the Caricaturist is the second best, and the Blind-man going up to vote, the best; and then the irresistible, tumultuous display of broad humour in the Chairing the Member, which is, perhaps, of all Hogarth's pictures, the most full of laughable incidents and situations; the yellow, rusty-faced Thresher, with his swinging flail breaking the head of one of the chairmen; and his redoubted antagonist, the Sailor, with his oak-stick, and stumping wooden-leg, a supplemental cudgel; the persevering ecstasy of the hobbling Blind Fiddler, who, in the fray, appears to have been trod upon by the artificial excrescence of the honest tar; Monsieur, the monkey, with piteous aspect, speculating the impending disaster of the triumphant Candidate, and his brother Bruin, appropriating the paunch; the precipitous flight of the Pigs, souse over head into the water; the fine Lady fainting, with vermilion lips; and the two Chimney Sweepers, satirical young rogues!—I had almost forgot the Politician, who is burning a hole through his hat with a candle in reading a newspaper; and the Chickens, in the *March to Finchley*, wandering in search of their lost dam, who is found in the pocket of the Serjeant. Of the pictures in the *Rake's Progress*, exhibited in this collection, I shall not here say any thing, because I think them on the whole inferior to the prints, and because they have already been criticised by a writer, to whom I could add nothing, in a paper which ought to be read by every lover of Hogarth and of English genius—I mean, Mr. Lamb's Essay on the works of Hogarth. I shall at present proceed to form some estimate of the style of art in which this painter excelled.

What distinguishes his compositions from all others of the same general kind, is, that they are equally remote from caricature, and from mere still life. It of course happens in subjects taken from common life, that the painter can procure real models, and he can get them to sit as long as he pleases. Hence, in general, those attitudes and expressions have been chosen which could be assumed the longest; and in imitating which, the artist by taking pains and time might produce almost as complete *fac-similes* as he could of a flower or a flower-pot, of a damask curtain or a china-vase. The copy was as perfect and as uninteresting in the one case as in the other. On the contrary, subjects of drollery and ridicule affording frequent examples of strange deformity and peculiarity of features, these have been eagerly seized by another class of artists, who, without subjecting themselves to the laborious drudgery of the Dutch school and their imitators, have produced our popular caricatures, by rudely copying or exaggerating the casual irregularities of the human countenance. Hogarth has equally avoided the faults of both these styles: the insipid tameness of the one, and the gross extravagance of the other, so as to give to the productions of his pencil equal solidity and effect. For his faces go to the very verge of caricature, and yet never (I believe in any single instance) go beyond it: they take the very widest latitude, and yet we always see the links which bind them to nature: they bear all the marks, and carry all the conviction of reality with them, as if we had seen the actual faces for the first time, from the precision, consistency, and good sense with which the whole and every part is made out. They exhibit the most uncommon features, with the most uncommon expressions: but which yet are as familiar and intelligible as possible, because with all the boldness, they have all the truth of nature. Hogarth has left behind him as many of these memorable faces, in their memorable moments, as, perhaps, most of us remember in the course of our lives, and has thus doubled the quantity of our experience.

It will assist us in forming a more determinate idea of the peculiar genius of Hogarth, to compare him with a deservedly admired artist in our own times. The highest authority on art in this country, I understand, has pronounced that Mr. Wilkie united the excellences of Hogarth to those of Teniers. I demur to this decision in both its branches; but in demurring to authority, it is necessary to give our reasons. I conceive that this ingenious and attentive observer of nature has certain essential, real, and indisputable excellences of his own; and I think it, therefore, the less important to clothe him with any vicarious merits which do not belong to him. Mr. Wilkie's pictures, generally speaking, derive almost their whole value from their *reality*, or the truth of the representation. They are works of pure imitative art; and the test of this style of composition is to represent nature faithfully and happily in its simplest combinations. It may be said of an artist like Mr. Wilkie, that *nothing human is indifferent to him*. His mind takes an interest in, and it gives an interest to, the most familiar scenes and transactions of life. He professedly gives character, thought, and passion, in their lowest degrees, and in their every-day forms. He selects the commonest events and appearances of nature for his subjects; and trusts to their very commonness for the interest and amusement he is to excite. Mr. Wilkie is a serious, prosaic, literal narrator of facts; and his pictures may be considered as diaries, or minutes of what is passing constantly about us. Hogarth, on the contrary, is essentially a comic painter; his pictures are not indifferent, unimpassioned descriptions of human nature, but rich, exuberant satires upon it. He is carried away by a passion for the *ridiculous*. His object is 'to shew vice her own feature, scorn her own image.' He is so far from contenting himself with still-life, that he is always on the verge of caricature, though without ever falling into it. He does not represent folly or vice in its incipient, or dormant, or *grub* state; but full grown, with wings, pampered into all sorts of affectation, airy, ostentatious, and extravagant. Folly is there seen at the height—the moon is at the full; it is 'the very error of the time.' There is a perpetual collision of eccentricities—a tilt and tournament of absurdities; the prejudices and caprices of mankind are let loose, and set together by the ears, as in a bear-garden. Hogarth paints nothing but comedy, or tragi-comedy. Wilkie paints neither one nor the other. Hogarth never looks at any object but to find out a moral or a ludicrous effect. Wilkie never looks at any object but to see that it is there. Hogarth's pictures are a perfect jest-book, from one end to the other. I do not remember a single joke in Wilkie's, except one very bad one of the boy in the Blind Fiddler, scraping the gridiron, or fire-shovel, I forget which it is.[1] In looking at Hogarth, you are ready to burst your sides with laughing at the unaccountable jumble of odd things which are brought together; you look at Wilkie's pictures with a mingled feeling of curiosity, and admiration at the accuracy of the representation. For instance, there is a most admirable head of a man coughing in the Rent-day; the action, the keeping, the choaked sensation, are inimitable: but there is nothing to laugh at in a man coughing. What strikes the mind is the difficulty of a man's being painted coughing, which here certainly is a masterpiece of art. But turn to the blackguard Cobbler in the Election Dinner, who has been smutting his neighbour's face over, and who is lolling out his tongue at the joke, with a most surprising obliquity of vision; and immediately 'your lungs begin to crow like chanticleer.' Again, there is the little boy crying in the Cut Finger, who only gives you the idea of a cross, disagreeable, obstinate child in pain: whereas the same face in Hogarth's Noon, from the ridiculous perplexity it is in, and its extravagant, noisy, unfelt distress, at the accident of having let fall the pye-dish, is quite irresistible. Mr. Wilkie, in his picture of the Ale-house door, I believe, painted Mr. Liston as one of the figures, without any great effect. Hogarth would have given any price for such a subject, and would have made it worth any money. I have never seen any thing, in the expression of comic humour, equal to Hogarth's pictures, but Liston's face!

Mr. Wilkie paints interiors: but still you generally connect them with the country. Hogarth, even when he paints people in the open air, represents them either as coming from London, as in the polling for votes at Brentford, or as returning to it, as the dyer and his wife at Bagnigge Wells. In this last picture, he has contrived to convert a common rural image into a type and emblem of city honours. In fact, I know no one who had a less pastoral imagination than Hogarth. He delights in the thick of St. Giles's or St. James's. His pictures breathe a certain close, greasy, tavern air. The fare he serves up to us consists of high-seasoned dishes, ragouts and olla podridas, like the supper in Gil Blas, which it requires a strong stomach to digest. Mr. Wilkie presents us with a sort of lenten fare, very good and wholesome, but rather insipid than overpowering! Mr. Wilkie's pictures are, in general, much better painted than Hogarth's; but the Marriage-a-la-Mode is superior both in colour and execution to any of Wilkie's. I may add here, without any disparagement, that, as an artist, Mr. Wilkie is hardly to be mentioned with Teniers. Neither in truth and brilliant clearness of colouring, nor in facility of execution, is there any comparison. Teniers was a perfect master in all these respects; and our own countryman is positively defective, notwithstanding the very laudable care with which he finishes every part of his pictures. There is an evident smear and dragging of the paint, which is also of a bad purple, or puttyish tone, and which never appears in the pictures of the Flemish artist, any more than in a looking-glass. Teniers, probably from his facility of execution, succeeded in giving a more local and momentary expression to his figures. They seem each going on with his particular amusement or occupation; Wilkie's have, in general, more a look of sitting for their pictures. Their compositions are very different also: and in this respect, I believe, Mr. Wilkie has the advantage. Teniers's boors are usually amusing themselves at skittles, or dancing, or drinking, or smoking, or doing what they like, in a careless, desultory way; and so the composition is loose and irregular. Wilkie's figures are all drawn up in a regular order, and engaged in one principal action, with occasional episodes. The story of the Blind Fiddler is the most interesting, and the best told. The two children standing before the musician are delightful. The Card-players is the best coloured of his pictures, if I am not mistaken. The Village Politicians, though excellent as to character and composition, is inferior as a picture to those which Mr. Wilkie has since painted. His latest pictures, however, do not appear to me to be his best. There is something of manner and affectation in the grouping of the figures, and a pink and rosy colour spread over them, which is out of place. The hues of Rubens and Sir Joshua do not agree with Mr. Wilkie's subjects. One of his last pictures, that of Duncan Gray, is equally remarkable for sweetness and simplicity in colour, composition, and expression. I must here conclude this very general account; for to point out the particular beauties of every one of his pictures in detail, would require an Essay by itself.

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[1] The Waiter drawing the cork, in the Rent-day, is another exception, and quite Hogarthian.

I have promised to say something in this Lecture on the difference between the grand and familiar style of painting; and I shall throw out what imperfect hints I have been able to collect on this subject, so often attempted, and never yet succeeded in, taking the examples and illustrations from Hogarth, that is, from what he possessed or wanted in each kind.

And first, the difference is not that between imitation and invention: for there is as much of this last quality in Hogarth, as in any painter or poet whatever. As, for example, to take two of his pictures only, I mean the Enraged Musician and the Gin Lane;—in one of which every conceivable variety of disagreeable and discordant sound—the razor-grinder turning his wheel; the boy with his drum, and the girl with her rattle momentarily suspended; the pursuivant blowing his horn; the shrill milkwoman; the inexorable ballad-singer, with her squalling infant; the pewterer's shop close by; the fishwomen; the chimey-sweepers at the top of a chimney, and the two cats in melodious concert on the ridge of the tiles; with the bells ringing in the distance, as we see by the flags flying:—and in the other, the complicated forms and signs of death and ruinous decay—the woman on the stairs of the bridge asleep, letting her child fall over; her ghastly companion opposite, next to death's door, with hollow, famished cheeks and staring ribs; the dog fighting with the man for the bare shin-bone; the man hanging himself in a garret; the female corpse put into a coffin by the parish beadle; the men marching after a funeral, seen through a broken wall in the back ground; and the very houses reeling as if drunk and tumbling about the ears of the infatuated victims below, the pawnbroker's being the only one that stands firm and unimpaired—enforce the moral meant to be conveyed by each of these pieces with a richness and research of combination and artful contrast not easily paralleled in any production of the pencil or the pen. The clock pointing to four in the morning, in Modern Midnight Conversation, just as the immoveable Parson Ford is filling out another glass from a brimming punch-bowl, while most of his companions, with the exception of the sly Lawyer, are falling around him 'like leaves in October;' and again, the extraordinary mistake of the man leaning against the post, in the Lord Mayor's Procession—shew a mind capable of seizing the most rare and transient coincidences of things, of imagining what either never happened at all, or of instantly fixing on and applying to its purpose what never happened but once. So far, the invention shewn in the great style of painting is poor in the comparison. Indeed, grandeur is supposed (whether rightly or not, I shall not here inquire) to imply a simplicity inconsistent with this inexhaustible variety of incident and circumstantial detail.

Secondly, the difference between the ideal and familiar style is not to be explained by the difference between the genteel and vulgar; for it is evident that Hogarth was almost as much at home in the genteel comedy, as in the broad farce of his pictures. He excelled not only in exhibiting the coarse humours and disgusting incidents of low life, but in exhibiting the vices, follies, and frivolity of the fashionable manners of his time: his fine ladies hardly yield the palm to his waiting-maids, and his lords and his footmen are on a respectable footing of equality. There is no want, for example, in the Marriage-a-la-Mode, or in Taste in High Life, of affectation verging into idiotism, or of languid sensibility, that might—

'Die of a rose in aromatic pain.'

In short, Hogarth was a painter, not of low but of actual life; and the ridiculous and prominent features of high or low life, of the great vulgar or the small, lay equally open to him. The Country Girl, in the first plate of the Harlot's Progress, coming out of the waggon, is not more simple and ungainly, than the same figure, in the second, is thoroughly initiated into the mysteries of her art, and suddenly accomplished in all the airs and graces of affectation, ease, and impudence. The affected languor and imbecility of the same girl afterwards, when put to beat hemp in Bridewell, is exactly in keeping with the character she has been taught to assume. Sir Joshua could do nothing like it in his line of portrait, which differed chiefly in the back ground. The fine gentleman at his levee, in the Rake's Progress, is also a complete model of a person of rank and fortune, surrounded by needy and worthless adventurers, fiddlers, poetasters and virtuosi, as was the custom in those days. Lord Chesterfield himself would not have been disgraced by sitting for it. I might multiply examples to shew that Hogarth was not characteristically deficient in that kind of elegance which arises from an habitual attention to external appearance and deportment. I will only add as instances, among his women, the two *elégantes* in the Bedlam scene, which are dressed (allowing for the difference of not quite a century) in the manner of Ackerman's dresses for May; and among the men, the Lawyer in Modern Midnight Conversation, whose gracious significant leer and sleek lubricated countenance exhibit all the happy finesse of his profession, when a silk gown has been added, or is likely to be added to it; and several figures in the Cockpit, who are evidently, at the first glance, gentlemen of the old school, and where the mixture of the blacklegs with the higher character is a still further test of the discriminating skill of the painter.

Again, Hogarth had not only a perception of fashion, but a sense of natural beauty. There are as many pleasing faces in his pictures as in Sir Joshua. Witness the girl picking the Rake's pocket in the Bagnio scene, whom we might suppose to be 'the Charming Betsy Careless;' the Poet's wife, handsomer than falls to the lot of most poets, who are generally more intent upon the idea in their own minds than on the image before them, and are glad to take up with Dulcineas of their own creating; the theatrical heroine in the Southwark Fair, who would be an accession to either of our play-houses; the girl asleep, ogled by the clerk in church time, and the sweetheart of the Good Apprentice in the reading desk in the second of that series, almost an ideal face and expression; the girl in her cap selected for a partner by the footman in the print of Morning, very handsome; and many others equally so, scattered like 'stray-gifts of love and beauty' through these pictures. Hogarth was not then exclusively the painter of deformity. He painted beauty or ugliness indifferently, as they came in his way; and was not by nature confined to those faces which are painful and disgusting, as many would have us believe.

Again, neither are we to look for the solution of the difficulty in the difference between the comic and the tragic, between loose laughter and deep passion. For Mr. Lamb has shewn unanswerably that Hogarth is quite at home in scenes of the deepest distress, in the heart-rending calamities of common life, in the expression of ungovernable rage, silent despair, or moody madness, enhanced by the tenderest sympathy, or aggravated by the frightful contrast of the most impenetrable and obdurate insensibility, as we see strikingly exemplified in the latter prints of the Rake's Progress. To the unbeliever in Hogarth's power over the passions and the feelings of the heart, the characters there speak like 'the hand-writing on the wall.' If Mr. Lamb has gone too far in paralleling some of these appalling representations with Shakespear, he was excusable in being led to set off what may be considered as a staggering paradox against a rooted prejudice. At any rate, the inferiority of Hogarth (be it what it may) did not arise from a want of passion and intense feeling; and in this respect he had the advantage over Fielding, for instance, and others of our comic writers, who excelled only in the light and ludicrous. There is in general a distinction, almost an impassable one, between the power of embodying the serious and the ludicrous; but these contradictory faculties were reconciled in Hogarth, as they were in Shakspeare, in Chaucer; and as it is said that they were in another extraordinary and later instance, Garrick's acting.

None of these then will do: neither will the most masterly and entire keeping of character lead us to an explanation of the grand and ideal style; for Hogarth possessed the most complete and absolute mastery over the truth and identity of expression and features in his subjects. Every stroke of his pencil tells according to a preconception in his mind. If the eye squints, the mouth is distorted; every feature acts, and is acted upon by the rest of the face; even the dress and attitude are such as could be proper to no other figure: the whole is under the influence of one impulse, that of truth and nature. Look at the heads in the Cockpit, already mentioned, one of the most masterly of his productions in this way, where the workings of the mind are seen in every muscle of the face; and the same expression, more intense or relaxed, of hope or of fear, is stamped on each of the characters, so that you could no more transpose any part of one countenance to another, than you could change a profile to a front face. Hogarth was, in one sense, strictly an historical painter: that is, he represented the manners and humours of mankind in action, and their characters by varied expression. Every thing in his pictures has life and motion in it. Not only does the business of the scene never stand still, but every feature is put into full play; the exact feeling of the moment is brought out, and carried to its utmost height, and then instantly seized and stamped on the canvass for ever. The expression is always taken *en passant*, in a state of progress or change, and, as it were, at the salient point. Besides the excellence of each individual face, the reflection of the expression from face to face, the contrast and struggle of particular motives and feelings in the different actors in the scene, as of anger, contempt, laughter, compassion, are conveyed in the happiest and most lively manner. His figures are not like the back-ground on which they are painted: even the pictures on the wall have a peculiar look of their own. All this is effected by a few decisive and rapid touches of the pencil, careless in appearance, but infallible in their results; so that one great criterion of the grand style insisted on by Sir Joshua Reynolds, that of leaving out the details, and attending to general character and outline, belonged to Hogarth. He did not indeed arrive at middle forms or neutral expression, which Sir Joshua makes another test of the ideal; for Hogarth was not insipid. That was the last fault with which he could be charged. But he had breadth and boldness of manner, as well as any of them; so that neither does that constitute the *ideal.*

What then does? We have reduced this to something like the last remaining quantity in an equation, where all the others have been ascertained. Hogarth had all the other parts of an original and accomplished genius except this, but this he had not. He had an intense feeling and command over the impressions of sense, of habit, of character, and passion, the serious and the comic, in a word, of nature, as it fell within his own observation, or came within the sphere of his actual experience; but he had little power beyond that sphere, or sympathy with that which existed only *in idea*. He was 'conformed to this world, not transformed.' If he attempted to paint Pharaoh's daughter, and Paul before Felix, he lost himself. His mind had feet and hands, but not wings to fly with. There is a mighty world of sense, of custom, of every-day action, of accidents and objects coming home to us, and interesting because they do so; the gross, material, stirring, noisy world of common life and selfish passion, of which Hogarth was absolute lord and master: there is another mightier world, that which exists only in conception and in power, the universe of thought and sentiment, that surrounds and is raised above the ordinary world of reality, as the empyrean surrounds this nether globe, into which few are privileged to soar with mighty wings outspread, and in which, as power is given them to embody their aspiring fancies, to 'give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name,' to fill with imaginary shapes of beauty or sublimity, and make the dark abyss pregnant, bringing that which is remote home to us, raising themselves to the lofty, sustaining themselves on the refined and abstracted, making all things like not what we know and feel in ourselves, in this 'ignorant present' time, but like what they must be in themselves, or in our noblest idea of them, and stamping that idea with reality, (but chiefly clothing the best and the highest with grace and grandeur): this is the ideal in art, in poetry, and in painting. There are things which are cognisable only to sense, which interest only our more immediate instincts and passions; the want of food, the loss of a limb, or a sum of money: there are others that appeal to different and nobler faculties; the wants of the mind, the hunger and thirst after truth and beauty; that is, to faculties commensurate with objects greater and of greater refinement, which to be grand must extend beyond ourselves to others, and our interests in which must be refined in proportion as they do so.[1] The interest in these subjects is in proportion to the power of conceiving them and the power of conceiving them is in proportion to the interest and affection for them, to the innate bias of the mind to elevate itself above every thing low, and purify itself from every thing gross. Hogarth only transcribes or transposes what was tangible and visible, not the abstracted and intelligible. You see in his pictures only the faces which you yourself have seen, or others like them; none of his characters are thinking of any person or thing out of the picture: you are only interested in the objects of their contention or pursuit, because they themselves are interested in them. There is nothing remote in thought, or comprehensive in feeling. The whole is intensely personal and local: but the interest of the ideal and poetical style of art, relates to more permanent and universal objects; and the characters and forms must be such as to correspond with and sustain that interest, and give external grace and dignity to it. Such were the subjects which Raphael chose; faces imbued with unalterable sentiment, and figures, that stand in the eternal silence of thought. He places before you objects of everlasting interest, events of greatest magnitude, and persons in them fit for the scene and action—warriors and kings, princes and nobles, and, greater yet, poets and philosophers; and mightier than these, patriarchs and apostles, prophets and founders of religion, saints and martyrs, angels and the Son of God. We know their importance and their high calling, and we feel that they do not belie it. We see them as they were painted, with the eye of faith. The light which they have kindled in the world, is reflected back upon their faces: the awe and homage which has been paid to them, is seated upon their brow, and encircles them like a glory. All those who come before them, are conscious of a superior presence. For example, the beggars, in the Gate Beautiful, are impressed with this ideal borrowed character. Would not the cripple and the halt feel a difference of sensation, and express it outwardly in such circumstances? And was the painter wrong to transfer this sense of preternatural power and the confidence of a saving faith to his canvass? Hogarth's Pool of Bethesda, on the contrary, is only a collection of common beggars receiving an alms. The waters may be stirred, but the mind is not stirred with them. The fowls, again, in the Miraculous Draught of Fishes, exult and clap their wings, and seem lifted up with some unusual cause of joy. There is not the same expansive, elevated principle in Hogarth. He has amiable and praise-worthy characters, indeed, among his bad ones. The Master of the Industrious and Idle Apprentice is a good citizen and a virtuous man; but his benevolence is mechanical and confined: it extends only to his shop, or, at most, to his ward. His face is not ruffled by passion, nor is it inspired by thought. To give another instance, the face of the faithful Female, fainting in the prison-scene in the Rake's Progress, is more one of effeminate softness than of distinguished tenderness, or heroic constancy. But in the pictures of the Mother and Child, by Raphael and Leonard da Vinci, we see all the tenderness purified from all the weakness of maternal affection, and exalted by the prospects of religious faith ; so that the piety and devotion of future generations seems to add its weight to the expression of feminine sweetness and parental love, to press upon the heart, and breathe in the countenance. This is the *ideal*, passion blended with thought and pointing to distant objects, not debased by grossness, not thwarted by accident, nor weakened by familiarity, but connected with forms and circumstances that give the utmost possible expansion and refinement to the general sentiment. With all my admiration of Hogarth, I cannot think him equal to Raphael. I do not know whether, if the port-folio were opened, I would not as soon look over the prints of Hogarth as those of Raphael ; but, assuredly, if the question were put to me, I would sooner never have seen the prints of Hogarth than never have seen those of Raphael. It is many years ago since I first saw the prints of the Cartoons hanging round the old-fashioned parlour of a little inn in a remote part of the country. I was then young : I had heard of the fame of the Cartoons, but this was the first time I had ever been admitted face to face into the presence of those divine guests. 'How was I then uplifted !' Prophets and Apostles stood before me as in a dream, and the Saviour of the Christian world, with his attributes of faith and power ; miracles were working on the walls ; the hand of Raphael was there ; and as his pencil traced the lines, I saw godlike spirits and lofty shapes descend and walk visibly the earth, but as if their thoughts still lifted them above the earth. There I saw the figure of St. Paul, pointing with noble fervour to 'temples not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ;' and that finer one of Christ in the boat, whose whole figure seems sustained by meekness and love ; and that of the same person surrounded by his disciples, like a flock of sheep listening to the music of some divine shepherd. I knew not how enough to admire them.—Later in life, I saw other works of this great painter (with more like them) collected in the Louvre : where Art, at that time, lifted up her head, and was seated on her throne, and said, 'All eyes shall see me, and all knees shall bow to me !' Honour was done to her and all hers. There was her treasure, and there the inventory of all she had. There she had gathered together her pomp, and there was her shrine, and there her votaries came and worshipped as in a temple. The crown she wore was brighter than that of kings. Where the struggles for human liberty had been, there were the triumphs of human genius. For there, in the Louvre, were the precious monuments of art:—There 'stood the statue that enchants the world;' there was Apollo, the Laocoon, the Dying Gladiator, the head of the Antinous, Diana with her Fawn, the Muses and the Graces in a ring, and all the glories of the antique world:—

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[1] When Meg Merrilies says in her dying moments—'Nay, nay, lay my head to the East,' what was the East to her? Not a reality but an idea of distant time and the land of her forefathers; the last, the strongest, and the best that occurred to her in this world. Her gipsy slang and dress were quaint and grotesque; her attachment to the Kaim of Derncleugh and the wood of Warrock was romantic; her worship of the East was *ideal*.

> 'There was old Proteus coming from the sea,
> And wreathed Triton blew his winding horn.'

There, too, were the two St. Jeromes, Correggio's, and Domenichino's; there was Raphael's Transfiguration; the St. Mark of Tintoret; Paul Veronese's Marriage of Cana; the Deluge of Poussin; and Titian's St. Peter Martyr. It was there that I learned to become an enthusiast of the lasting works of the great painters, and of their names no less magnificent; grateful to the heart as the sound of celestial harmony from other spheres, waking around us (whether heard or not) from youth to age; the stay, the guide, and anchor of our purest thoughts; whom, having once seen, we always remember, and who teach us to see all things through them; without whom life would be to begin again, and the earth barren; of Raphael, who lifted the human form half way to heaven; of Titian, who painted the mind in the face, and unfolded the soul of things to the eye; of Rubens, around whose pencil gorgeous shapes thronged numberless, startling us by the novel accidents of form and colour, putting the spirit of motion into the universe, and weaving a gay fantastic round and Bacchanalian dance with nature; of Rembrandt, too, who 'smoothed the raven down of darkness till it smiled,' and tinged it with a light like streaks of burning ore: of these, and more than these, of whom the world was scarce worthy, and for the loss of whom nothing could console me—not even the works of Hogarth!

LECTURE VIII

ON THE COMIC WRITERS OF THE LAST CENTURY

The question which has been often asked, *Why there are comparatively so few good modern Comedies?* appears in a great measure to answer itself. It is because so many excellent comedies have been written, that there are none written at present. Comedy naturally wears itself out—destroys the very food on which it lives; and by constantly and successfully exposing the follies and weaknesses of mankind to ridicule, in the end leaves itself nothing worth laughing at. It holds the mirror up to nature; and men, seeing their most striking peculiarities and defects pass in gay review before them, learn either to avoid or conceal them. It is not the criticism which the public taste exercises upon the stage, but the criticism which the stage exercises upon public manners, that is fatal to comedy, by rendering the subject-matter of it tame, correct, and spiritless. We are drilled into a sort of stupid decorum, and forced to wear the same dull uniform of outward appearance; and yet it is asked, why the Comic Muse does not point, as she was wont, at the peculiarities of our gait and gesture, and exhibit the picturesque contrasts of our dress and costume, in all that graceful variety in which she delights. The genuine source of comic writing,

'Where it must live, or have no life at all,'

is undoubtedly to be found in the distinguishing peculiarities of men and manners. Now this distinction can subsist, so as to be strong, pointed, and general, only while the manners of different classes are formed almost immediately by their particular circumstances, and the characters of individuals by their natural temperament and situation, without being everlastingly modified and neutralized by intercourse with the world—by knowledge and education. In a certain stage of society, men may be said to vegetate like trees, and to become rooted to the soil in which they grow. They have no idea of any thing beyond themselves and their immediate sphere of action; they are, as it were, circumscribed, and defined by their particular circumstances; they are what their situation makes them, and nothing more. Each is absorbed in his own profession or pursuit, and each in his turn contracts that habitual peculiarity of manners and opinions which makes him the subject of ridicule to others, and the sport of the Comic Muse. Thus the physician is nothing but a physician, the lawyer is a mere lawyer, the scholar degenerates into a pedant, the country squire is a different species of being from the fine gentleman, the citizen and the courtier inhabit a different world, and even the affectation of certain characters, in aping the follies or vices of their betters, only serves to shew the immeasurable distance which custom or fortune has placed between them. Hence the earlier comic writers, taking advantage of this mixed and solid mass of ignorance, folly, pride, and prejudice, made those deep and lasting incisions into it,—have given those sharp and nice touches, that bold relief to their characters,—have opposed them in every variety of contrast and collision, of conscious self-satisfaction and mutual antipathy, with a power which can only find full scope in the same rich and inexhaustible materials. But in proportion as comic genius succeeds in taking off the mask from ignorance and conceit, as it teaches us

'To see ourselves as others see us,'—

in proportion as we are brought out on the stage together, and our prejudices clash one against the other, our sharp angular points wear off; we are no longer rigid in absurdity, passionate in folly, and we prevent the ridicule directed at our habitual foibles by laughing at them ourselves.

If it be said, that there is the same fund of absurdity and prejudice in the world as ever—that there are the same unaccountable perversities lurking at the bottom of every breast,—I should answer, Be it so: but at least we keep our follies to ourselves as much as possible; we palliate, shuffle, and equivocate with them; they sneak into bye-corners, and do not, like *Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims*, march along the high road, and form a procession; they do not entrench themselves strongly behind custom and precedent; they are not embodied in professions and ranks in life; they are not organized into a system; they do not openly resort to a standard, but are a sort of straggling non-descripts, that, like *Wart*, 'present no mark to the foeman.' As to the gross and palpable absurdities of modern manners, they are too shallow and barefaced, and those who affect are too little *serious* in them, to make them worth the detection of the Comic Muse. They proceed from an idle, impudent affectation of folly in general, in the dashing *bravura* style, not from an infatuation with any of its characteristic modes. In short, the proper object of ridicule is *egotism*: and a man cannot be a very great egotist, who every day sees himself represented on the stage. We are deficient in comedy, because we are without characters in real life—as we have no historical pictures, because we have no faces proper for them.

It is, indeed, the evident tendency of all literature to generalise and *dissipate* character, by giving men the same artificial education, and the same common stock of ideas; so that we see all objects from the same point of view, and through the same reflected medium;—we learn to exist, not in ourselves, but in books;—all men become alike mere readers—spectators, not actors in the scene, and lose their proper personal identity. The templar, the wit, the man of pleasure, and the man of fashion, the courtier and the citizen, the knight and the squire, the lover and the miser—*Lovelace*, *Lothario*, *Will Honeycomb*, and *Sir Roger de Coverley*, *Sparkish* and *Lord Foppington*, *Western* and *Tom Jones*, *My Father* and *My Uncle Toby*, *Millamant* and *Sir Sampson Legend*, *Don Quixote* and *Sancho*, *Gil Blas* and *Guzman d'Alfarache*, *Count Fathom* and *Joseph Surface*,—have met and exchanged common-places on the barren plains of the *haute littérature*—toil slowly on to the temple of science, 'seen a long way off upon a level,' and end in one dull compound of politics, criticism, and metaphysics!

We cannot expect to reconcile opposite things. If, for example, any of us were to put ourselves into the stage-coach from Salisbury to London, it is more than probable we should not meet with the same number of odd accidents, or ludicrous distresses on the road, that befel *Parson Adams*; but why, if we get into a common vehicle, and submit to the conveniences of modern travelling, should we complain of the want of adventures? Modern manners may be compared to a modern stage-coach; our limbs may be a little cramped with the confinement, and we may grow drowsy, but we arrive safe, without any very amusing or very sad accident, at our journey's end.

In this theory I have, at least, the authority of Sterne and the Tatler on my side, who attribute the greater variety and richness of comic excellence in our writers, to the greater variety and distinctness of character among ourselves; the roughness of the texture and the sharp angles not being worn out by the artificial refinements of intellect, or the frequent collision of social intercourse.—It has been argued on the other hand, indeed, that this circumstance makes against me; that the suppression of the grosser indications of absurdity ought to stimulate and give scope to the ingenuity and penetration of the comic writer who is to detect them; and that the progress of wit and humour ought to keep pace with critical distinctions and metaphysical niceties. Some theorists, indeed, have been sanguine enough to expect a regular advance from grossness to refinement on the stage and in real life, marked on a graduated scale of human perfectibility, and have been hence led to imagine that the best of our old comedies were no better than the coarse jests of a set of country clowns—a sort of *comedies bourgeoises*, compared with the admirable productions which might, but have not, been written in our times. I must protest against this theory altogether, which would go to degrade genteel comedy from a high court lady into a literary prostitute. I do not know what these persons mean by refinement in this instance. Do they find none in Millamant and her morning dreams, in Sir Roger de Coverley and his widow? Did not Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve, approach tolerably near

'——the ring
Of mimic statesmen and their merry king?'

Is there no distinction between an Angelica and a Miss Prue, a Valentine, a Tattle, and a Ben? Where, in the annals of modern literature, shall we find any thing more refined, more deliberate, more abstracted in vice, than the nobleman in Amelia? Are not the compliments which Pope paid to his friends equal in taste and elegance to any which have been paid since? Are there no traits in Sterne? Is not Richardson minute enough? Must we part with Sophia Western and her muff, and Clarissa Harlowe's 'preferable regards' for the loves of the plants and the triangles? Or shall we say that the Berinthias and Alitheas of former times were little rustics, because they did not, like our modern belles, subscribe to circulating libraries, read Beppo, prefer Gertrude of Wyoming to the Lady of the Lake, or the Lady of the Lake to Gertrude of Wyoming, differ in their sentiments on points of taste or systems of mineralogy, and deliver dissertations on the arts with Corinna of Italy? They had something else to do and to talk about. They were employed in reality, as we see them on the stage, in setting off their charms to the greatest advantage, in mortifying their rivals by the most pointed irony, and trifling with their lovers with infinite address. The height of comic elegance and refinement is not to be found in the general diffusion of knowledge and civilization, which tends to level and neutralize, but in the pride of individual distinction, and the contrast between the conflicting pretensions of different ranks in society.

For this reason I conceive that the alterations which have taken place in coversation and dress, in consequence of the change of manners in the same period, have been by no means favourable to comedy. The present prevailing style of conversation is not *personal*, but critical and analytical. It consists almost entirely in the discussion of general topics, in ascertaining the merits of authors and their works: and Congreve would be able to derive no better hints from the conversations of our toilettes or drawing-rooms, for the exquisite raillery or poignant repartee of his dialogues, than from a deliberation of the Royal Society. In manner, the extreme simplicity and graceful uniformity of modern dress, however favourable to the arts, has certainly stript comedy of one of its richest ornaments and most expressive symbols. The sweeping pall and buskin, and nodding plume, were never more serviceable to tragedy, than the enormous hoops and stiff stays worn by the belles of former days, were to the intrigues of comedy. They assisted wonderfully in heightening the mysteries of the passion, and adding to the intricacy of the plot. Wycherley and Vanbrugh could not have spared the dresses of Vandyke. These strange fancy-dresses, perverse disguises, and counterfeit shapes, gave an agreeable scope to the imagination. 'That sevenfold fence' was a sort of foil to the lusciousness of the dialogue, and a barrier against the sly encroachments of *double entendre*. The greedy eye and bold hand of indiscretion were repressed, which gave a greater license to the tongue. The senses were not to be gratified in an instant. Love was entangled in the folds of the swelling handkerchief, and the desires might wander for ever round the circumference of a quilted petticoat, or find a rich lodging in the flowers of a damask stomacher. There was room for years of patient contrivance, for a thousand thoughts, schemes, conjectures, hopes, fears, and wishes. There seemed no end of obstacles and delays; to overcome so many difficulties was the work of ages. A mistress was an angel, concealed behind whalebone, flounces, and brocade. What an undertaking to penetrate through the disguise! What an impulse must it give to the blood, what a keenness to the invention, what a volubility to the tongue! 'Mr. Smirk, you are a brisk man,' was then the most significant commendation; but now-a-days—a woman can be *but undressed!*—Again, the character of the fine gentleman is at present a little obscured on the stage, nor do we immediately recognise it elsewhere, for want of the formidable *insignia* of a bag-wig and sword. Without these outward credentials, the public must not only be unable to distinguish this character intuitively, but it must be 'almost afraid to know itself.' The present simple disguise of a gentleman is like the *incognito* of kings. The opinion of others affects our opinion of ourselves; and we can hardly expect from a modern man of fashion that air of dignity and superior gracefulness of carriage, which those must have assumed who were conscious that all eyes were upon them, and that their lofty pretensions continually exposed them either to public scorn or challenged public admiration. A lord who should take the wall of the plebeian passengers without a sword by his side, would hardly have his claim of precedence acknowledged; nor could he be supposed to have that obsolete air of self-importance about him, which should alone clear the pavement at his approach. It is curious how an ingenious actor of the present day (Mr. Farren) should play Lord Ogleby so well as he does, having never seen any thing of the sort in reality. A nobleman in full costume, and in broad day, would be a phenomenon like the lord mayor's coach. The attempt at getting up genteel comedy at present is a sort of Galvanic experiment, a revival of the dead.[1]

I have observed in a former Lecture, that the most spirited æra of our comic drama was that which reflected the conversation, tone, and manners of the profligate, but witty age of Charles II. With the graver and more business-like turn which the Revolution probably gave to our minds, comedy stooped from her bolder and more fantastic flights; and the ferocious attack made by the nonjuring divine, Jeremy Collier, on the immorality and profaneness of the plays then chiefly in vogue, nearly frightened those unwarrantable liberties of wit and humour from the stage, which were no longer countenanced at court nor copied in the city. Almost the last of our writers who ventured to hold out in the prohibited track, was a female adventurer, Mrs. Centlivre, who seemed to take advantage of the privilege of her sex, and to set at defiance the cynical denunciations of the angry puritanical reformist. Her plays have a provoking spirit and volatile salt in them, which still preserves them from decay. Congreve is said to have been jealous of their success at the time, and that it was one cause which drove him in disgust from the stage. If so, it was without any good reason: for these plays have great and intrinsic merit in them, which entitled them to their popularity (and it is only spurious and undeserved popularity which should excite a feeling of jealousy in any well-regulated mind): and besides, their merit was of a kind entirely different from his own. The Wonder and the Busy Body are properly comedies of intrigue. Their interest depends chiefly on the intricate involution and artful *denouement* of the plot, which has a strong tincture of mischief in it, and the wit is seasoned by the archness of the humour and sly allusion to the most delicate points. They are plays evidently written by a very clever woman, but still by a woman: for I hold, in spite of any fanciful theories to the contrary, that there is a distinction discernible in the minds of women as well as in their faces. The Wonder is one of the best of our acting plays. The passion of jealousy in Don Felix is managed in such a way as to give as little offence as possible to the audience, for every appearance combines to excite and confirm his worst suspicions, while we, who are in the secret, laugh at his ground-

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[1] I have only to add, by way of explanation on this subject, the following passage from the Characters of Shakspeare's Plays: 'There is a certain stage of society in which people become conscious of their peculiarities and absurdities, affect to disguise what they are, and set up pretensions to what they are not. This gives rise to a corresponding style of comedy, the object of which is to detect the disguises of self-love, and to make reprisals on these preposterous assumptions of vanity, by marking the contrast between the real and the affected character as severely as possible, and denying to those, who would impose on us for what they are not, even the merit which they have. This is the comedy of artificial life, of wit and satire, such as we see it in Congreve, Wycherley, Vanbrugh, &c. To this succeeds a state of society from which the same sort of affectation and pretence are

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banished by a greater knowledge of the world, or by their successful exposure on the stage; and which by neutralizing the materials of comic character, both natural and artificial, leaves no comedy at all—but *the sentimental.* Such is our modern comedy. There is a period in the progress of manners anterior to both these, in which the foibles and follies of individuals are of nature's planting, not the growth of art or study; in which they are therefore unconscious of them themselves, or care not who knows them, if they can but have their whim out; and in which, as there is no attempt at imposition, the spectators rather receive pleasure from humouring the inclinations of the persons they laugh at, than wish to give them pain by exposing their absurdity. This may be called the comedy of nature, and it is the comedy which we generally find in Shakspeare.' P. 256.

less uneasiness and apprehensions. The ambiguity of the heroine's situation, which is like a continued practical *equivoque*, gives rise to a quick succession of causeless alarms, subtle excuses, and the most hair-breadth 'scapes. The scene near the end, in which Don Felix, pretending to be drunk, forces his way out of Don Manuel's house, who wants to keep him a prisoner, by producing his marriage-contract in the shape of a pocket-pistol, with the terrors and confusion into which the old gentleman is thrown by this sort of *argumentum ad hominem*, is one of the richest treats the stage affords, and calls forth incessant peals of laughter and applause. Besides the two principal characters (Violante and Don Felix) Lissardo and Flippanta come in very well to carry on the under-plot; and the airs and graces of an amorous waiting-maid and conceited man-servant, each copying after their master and mistress, were never hit off with more natural volubility or affected *nonchalance* than in this enviable couple. Lissardo's playing off the diamond ring before the eyes of his mortified Dulcinea, and aping his master's absent manner while repeating—'Roast me these Violantes,' as well as the jealous quarrel of the two waiting-maids, which threatens to end in some very extraordinary discoveries, are among the most amusing traits in this comedy. Colonel Breton, the lover of Clara, is a spirited and enterprising soldier of fortune; and his servant Gibby's undaunted, incorrigible blundering, with a dash of nationality in it, tells in a very edifying way.—The Busy Body is inferior, in the interest of the story and characters, to the Wonder; but it is full of bustle and gaiety from beginning to end. The plot never stands still; the situations succeed one another like the changes of machinery in a pantomime. The nice dove-tailing of the incidents, and cross-reading in the situations, supplies the place of any great force of wit or sentiment. The time for the entrance of each person on the stage is the moment when they are least wanted, and when their arrival makes either themselves or somebody else look as foolish as possible. The laughableness of this comedy, as well as of the Wonder, depends on a brilliant series of mistimed exits and entrances. Marplot is the whimsical hero of the piece, and a standing memorial of unmeaning vivacity and assiduous impertinence.

The comedies of Steele were the first that were written expressly with a view not to imitate the manners, but to reform the morals of the age. The author seems to be all the time on his good behaviour, as if writing a comedy was no very creditable employment, and as if the ultimate object of his ambition was a dedication to the queen. Nothing can be better meant, or more inefficient. It is almost a misnomer to call them comedies; they are rather homilies in dialogue, in which a number of very pretty ladies and gentlemen discuss the fashionable topics of gaming, of duelling, of seduction, of scandal, &c. with a sickly sensibility, that shews as little hearty aversion to vice, as sincere attachment to virtue. By not meeting the question fairly on the ground of common experience, by slubbering over the objections, and varnishing over the answers, the whole distinction between virtue and vice (as it appears in evidence in the comic drama) is reduced to verbal professions, and a mechanical, infantine goodness. The sting is, indeed, taken out of what is bad; but what is good, at the same time, loses its manhood and nobility of nature by this enervating process. I am unwilling to believe that the only difference between right and wrong is mere cant, or *make-believe;* and I imagine, that the advantage which the moral drama possesses over mere theoretical precept or general declamation is this, that by being left free to imitate nature as it is, and not being referred to an ideal standard, it is its own voucher for the truth of the inferences it draws, for its warnings, or its examples; that it brings out the higher, as well as lower principles of action, in the most striking and convincing points of view; satisfies us that virtue is not a mere shadow; clothes it with passion, imagination, reality, and, if I may so say, translates morality from the language of theory into that of practice. But Steele, by introducing the artificial mechanism of morals on the stage, and making his characters act, not from individual motives and existing circumstances, the truth of which every one must feel, but from vague topics and general rules, the truth of which is the very thing to be proved in detail, has lost that fine 'vantage ground which the stage lends to virtue; takes away from it its best grace, the grace of sincerity; and, instead of making it a test of truth, has made it an echo of the doctrine of the schools—and 'the one cries *Mum*, while t'other cries *Budget*!' The comic writer, in my judgment, then, ought to open the volume of nature and the world for his living materials, and not take them out of his ethical common-place book; for in this way, neither will throw any additional light upon the other. In all things there is a division of labour; and I am as little for introducing the tone of the pulpit or reading-desk on the stage, as for introducing plays and interludes in church-time, according to the good old popish practice. It was a part, indeed, of Steele's plan, 'by the politeness of his style and the genteelness of his expressions,'[1] to bring about a reconciliation between things which he thought had hitherto been kept too far asunder, to wed the graces to the virtues, and blend pleasure with profit. And in this design he succeeded admirably in his Tatler, and some other works; but in his comedies he has failed. He has confounded, instead of harmonising—has taken away its gravity from wisdom, and its charm from gaiety. It is not that in his plays we find 'some soul of goodness in things evil;' but they have no soul either of good or bad. His Funeral is as trite, as tedious, and full of formal grimace, as a procession of mutes and undertakers. The characters are made either affectedly good and forbearing, with 'all the milk of human kindness;' or purposely bad and disgusting, for the others to exercise their squeamish charities upon them. The Conscious Lovers is the best; but that is far from good, with the exception of the scene between Mr. Thomas and Phillis, who are fellow-servants, and commence lovers from being set to clean the window together. We are here once more in the company of our old friend, Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. Indiana is as listless, and as insipid, as a drooping figure on an Indian screen; and Mr. Myrtle and Mr. Bevil only just disturb the still life of the scene. I am sorry that in this censure I should have Parson Adams against me; who thought the Conscious Lovers the only play fit for a Christian to see, and as good as a sermon. For myself, I would rather have read, or heard him read, one of his own manuscript sermons: and if the volume which he left behind him in his saddle-bags was to be had in print, for love or money, I would at any time walk ten miles on foot only to get a sight of it.

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[1] See Mandeville's Fable of the Bees.

Addison's Drummer, or the Haunted House, is a pleasant farce enough; but adds nothing to our idea of the author of the Spectator.

Pope's joint after-piece, called 'An Hour after Marriage,' was not a successful attempt. He brought into it 'an alligator stuff'd,' which disconcerted the ladies, and gave just offence to the critics. Pope was too fastidious for a farce-writer; and yet the most fastidious people, when they step out of their regular routine, are apt to become the grossest. The smallest offences against probability or decorum are, to their habitual scrupulousness, as unpardonable as the greatest. This was the rock on which Pope probably split. The affair was, however, hushed up; and he wreaked his discreet vengeance at leisure on the 'odious endeavours,' and more odious success of Colley Cibber in the line in which he had failed.

Gay's 'What-d'ye-call-it,' is not one of his happiest things. His 'Polly' is a complete failure, which, indeed, is the common fate of second parts. If the original Polly, in the Beggar's Opera, had not had more winning ways with her, she would hardly have had so many Countesses for representatives as she has had, from her first appearance up to the present moment.

Fielding was a comic writer, as well as a novelist; but his comedies are very inferior to his novels: they are particularly deficient both in plot and character. The only excellence which they have is that of the style, which is the only thing in which his novels are deficient. The only dramatic pieces of Fielding that retain possession of the stage are, the Mock Doctor (a tolerable translation from Moliere's *Medecin malgrè lui*), and his Tom Thumb, a very admirable piece of burlesque. The absurdities and bathos of some of our celebrated tragic writers could hardly be credited, but for the notes at the bottom of this preposterous medley of bombast, containing his authorities and the parallel passages. Dryden, Lee, and Shadwell, make no very shining figure there. Mr. Liston makes a better figure in the text. His Lord Grizzle is prodigious. What a name, and what a person! It has been said of this ingenious actor, that 'he is very great in Liston;' but he is even greater in Lord Grizzle. What a wig is that he wears! How flighty, flaunting, and fantastical! Not 'like those hanging locks of young Apollo,' nor like the serpent-hair of the Furies of Æschylus; but as troublous, though not as tragical as the one—as imposing, though less classical than the other. '*Que terribles sont ces cheveux gris*,' might be applied to Lord Grizzle's most valiant and magnanimous curls. This sapient courtier's 'fell of hair does at a dismal treatise rouse and stir as if life were in 't.' His wits seem flying away with the disorder of his flowing locks, and to sit as loosely on our hero's head as the caul of his peruke. What a significant vacancy in his open eyes and mouth! what a listlessness in his limbs! what an abstraction of all thought or purpose! With what an headlong impulse of enthusiasm he throws himself across the stage when he is going to be married, crying, 'Hey for Doctor's Commons,' as if the genius of folly had taken whole-length possession of his person! And then his dancing is equal to the discovery of a sixth sense—which is certainly very different from *common sense*! If this extraordinary personage cuts a great figure in his life, he is no less wonderful in his death and burial. 'From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step;' and this character would almost seem to prove, that there is but one step from the ridiculous to the sublime.—Lubin Log, however inimitable in itself, is itself an imitation of something existing elsewhere; but the Lord Grizzle of this truly original actor, is a pure invention of his own. His Caper, in the Widow's Choice, can alone dispute the palm with it in incoherence and volatility; for that, too, 'is high fantastical,' almost as full of emptiness, in as grand a gusto of insipidity, as profoundly absurd, as elaborately nonsensical! Why does not Mr. Liston play in some of Moliere's farces? I heartily wish that the author of Love, Law, and Physic, would launch him on the London boards in Monsieur Jourdain, or Monsieur Pourceaugnac. The genius of Liston and Moliere together—

> '——Must bid a gay defiance to mischance.'

Mr. Liston is an actor hardly belonging to the present age. Had he lived, unfortunately for us, in the time of Colley Cibber, we should have seen what a splendid niche he would have given him in his Apology.

Cibber is the hero of the Dunciad; but it cannot be said of him, that he was 'by merit raised to that bad eminence.' He was pert, not dull; a coxcomb, not a blockhead; vain, but not malicious. Pope's unqualified abuse of him was mere spleen; and the most obvious provocation to it seems to have been an excess of flippant vivacity in the constitution of Cibber. That Cibber's Birth-day Odes were dull, is true; but this was not peculiar to him. It is an objection which may be made equally to Shadwell's, to Whitehead's, to Warton's, to Pye's, and to all others, except those which of late years have *not* been written! In his Apology for his own Life, Cibber is a most amusing biographer: happy in his own good opinion, the best of all others; teeming with animal spirits, and uniting the self-sufficiency of youth with the garrulity of age. His account of his waiting as a page behind the chair of the old Duchess of Marlborough, at the time of the Revolution, who was then in the bloom of youth and beauty, which seems to have called up in him the secret homage of 'distant, enthusiastic, respectful love,' fifty years after, and the compliment he pays to her (then in her old age), 'a great grandmother without grey hairs,' is as delightful as any thing in fiction or romance; and is the evident origin of Mr. Burke's celebrated apostrophe to the Queen of France. Nor is the political confession of faith which he makes on this occasion, without a suitable mixture of vanity and sincerity: the vanity we may ascribe to the player, the sincerity to the politician. The self-complacency with which he talks of his own success both as a player and a writer, is not greater than the candour and cordiality with which he does heaped justice to the merits of his theatrical contemporaries and predecessors. He brings down the history of the stage, either by the help of observation or tradition, from the time of Shakspeare to his own; and quite dazzles the reader with a constellation of male and female, of tragic and comic, of past and present excellence. He gives portraits at full length of Kynaston, of Betterton, of Booth, of Estcourt, of Penkethman and Dogget, of Mohun and Wilks, of Nokes and Sandford, of Mrs. Montford, of Mrs. Oldfield, of Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Bracegirdle, and of others of equal note; with delectable criticisms on their several performances, and anecdotes of their private lives, with scarcely a single particle of jealousy or ill-nature, or any other motive than to expatiate in the delight of talking of the ornaments of his art, and a wish to share his pleasure with the reader. I wish I could quote some of these theatrical sketches; but the time presses. The latter part of his work is less entertaining when he becomes Manager, and gives us an exact statement of his squabbles with the Lord Chamberlain, and the expense of his ground-rent, his repairs, his scenery, and his dresses.—In his plays, his personal character perhaps predominates too much over the inventiveness of his Muse; but so far from being dull, he is every where light, fluttering, and airy. His pleasure in himself made him desirous to please; but his fault was, that he was too soon satisfied with what he did, that his indolence or want of thought led him to indulge in the vein that flowed from him with most ease, and that his vanity did not allow him to distinguish between what he did best and worst. His Careless Husband is a very elegant piece of agreeable, thoughtless writing; and the incident of Lady Easy throwing her handkerchief over her husband, whom she finds asleep in a chair by the side of her waiting-woman, was an admirable contrivance, taken, as he informs us, from real life. His Double Gallant, which has been lately revived, though it cannot rank in the first, may take its place in the second or third class of comedies. It abounds in character, bustle, and stage-effect. It belongs to what may be called the composite style; and very happily mixes up the comedy of intrigue, such as we see it in Mrs. Centlivre's Spanish plots, with a tolerable share of the wit and spirit of Congreve and Vanbrugh. As there is a good deal of wit, there is a spice of wickedness in this play, which was a privilege of the good old style of comedy, not altogether abandoned in Cibber's time. The luscious vein of the dialogue is stopped short in many of the scenes of the revived play, though not before we perceive its object—

'—— In hidden mazes running,
With wanton haste and giddy cunning.'

These imperfect hints of double meanings, however, pass off without any marks of reprobation; for unless they are insisted on, or made pretty broad, the audience, from being accustomed to the cautious purity of the modern drama, are not very expert in decyphering the equivocal allusion, for which they are not on the look-out. To what is this increased nicety owing? Was it that vice, from being formerly less common (though more fashionable) was less catching than at present? The first inference is by no means in our favour: for though I think that the grossness of manners prevailing in our fashionable comedies was a direct transcript of the manners of the court at the time, or in the period immediately preceding, yet the same grossness of expression and allusion existed long before, as in the plays of Shakspeare and Ben Jonson, when there was not this grossness of manners, and it has of late years been gradually refining away. There is a certain grossness or freedom of expression, which may arise as often from unsuspecting simplicity as from avowed profligacy. Whatever may be our progress either in virtue or vice since the age of Charles II. certain it is, that our manners are not mended since the time of Elizabeth and Charles I. Is it, then, that vice was formerly a thing more to be wondered at than imitated; that behind the rigid barriers of religion and morality it might be exposed freely, without the danger of any serious practical consequences—whereas now that the safeguards of wholesome authority and prejudice are removed, we seem afraid to trust our eyes or ears with a single situation or expression of a loose tendency, as if the mere mention of licentiousness implied a conscious approbation of it, and the extreme delicacy of our moral sense would be debauched by the bare suggestion of the possibility of vice? But I shall not take upon me to answer this question. The characters in the Double Gallant are well kept up: At-All and Lady Dainty are the two most prominent characters in this comedy, and those into which Cibber has put most of his own nature and genius. They are the essence of active impertinence and fashionable frivolity. Cibber, in short, though his name has been handed down to us as a bye-word of impudent pretension and impenetrable dulness by the classical pen of his accomplished rival, who, unfortunately, did not admit of any merit beyond the narrow circle of wit and friendship in which he himself moved, was a gentleman and a scholar of the old school; a man of wit and pleasantry in conversation, a diverting mimic, an excellent actor, an admirable dramatic critic, and one of the best comic writers of his age. His works, instead of being a *caput mortuum* of literature, had a great deal of the spirit, with a little too much of the froth. His Nonjuror was taken from Moliere's Tartuffe, and has been altered to the Hypocrite. Love's Last Shift appears to have been his own favourite; and he received the compliments of Sir John Vanbrugh and old Mr. Southern upon it:—the latter said to him, 'Young man, your play is a good one; and it will succeed, if you do not spoil it by your acting.' His plays did not always take equally. It is ludicrous to hear him complaining of the ill success of one of them, Love in a Riddle, a pastoral comedy, 'of a nice morality,' and well spoken sentiments, which he wrote in opposition to the Beggar's Opera, at the time when its worthless and vulgar rival was carrying every thing triumphantly before it. Cibber brings this, with much pathetic *naïveté*, as an instance of the lamentable want of taste in the town!

The Suspicious Husband by Hoadley, the Jealous Wife by Colman, and the Clandestine Marriage by Colman and Garrick, are excellent plays of the middle style of comedy; which are formed rather by judgment and selection, than by any original vein of genius; and have all the parts of a good comedy in degree, without having any one prominent, or to excess. The character of Ranger, in the Suspicious Husband, is only a variation of those of Farquhar, of the same class as his Sir Harry Wildair and others, without equal spirit. A great deal of the story of the Jealous Wife is borrowed from Fielding; but so faintly, that the resemblance is hardly discernible till you are apprised of it. The Jealous Wife herself is, however, a dramatic *chef-d'œuvre*, and worthy of being acted as often, and better than it is. Sir Harry Beagle is a true fox-hunting English squire. The Clandestine Marriage is nearly without a fault; and has some lighter theatrical graces, which I suspect Garrick threw into it. *Canton* is, I should think, his; though this classification of him among the ornamental parts of the play may seem whimsical. Garrick's genius does not appear to have been equal to the construction of a solid drama; but he could retouch and embellish with great gaiety and knowledge of the technicalities of his art. Garrick not only produced joint-pieces and after-pieces, but often set off the plays of his friends and contemporaries with the garnish, the *sauce piquant*, of prologues and epilogues, at which he had an admirable knack.—The elder Colman's translation of Terence, I may here add, has always been considered, by good judges, as an equal proof of the author's knowledge of the Latin language, and taste in his own.

Bickerstaff's plays and comic operas are continually acted: they come under the class of mediocrity, generally speaking. Their popularity seems to be chiefly owing to the unaffected ease and want of pretension with which they are written, with a certain humorous *naïveté* in the lower characters, and an exquisite adaptation of the music to the songs. His Love in a Village is one of the most delightful comic operas on the stage. It is truly pastoral; and the sense of music hovers over the very scene like the breath of morning. In his alteration of the Tartuffe he has spoiled the Hypocrite, but he has added Maw-worm.

Mrs. Cowley's comedy of the Belles' Stratagem, Who's the Dupe, and others, are of the second or third class: they are rather *refaccimentos* of the characters, incidents, and materials of former writers, got up with considerable liveliness and ingenuity, than original compositions, with marked qualities of their own.

Goldsmith's Good-natured Man is inferior to She Stoops to Conquer; and even this last play, with all its shifting vivacity, is rather a sportive and whimsical effusion of the author's fancy, a delightful and delicately managed caricature, than a genuine comedy.

Murphy's plays of All in the Wrong and Know Your Own Mind, are admirably written; with sense, spirit, and conception of character: but without any great effect of the humorous, or that truth of feeling which distinguishes the boundary between the absurdities of natural character and the gratuitous fictions of the poet's pen. The heroes of these two plays, Millamour and Sir Benjamin Constant, are too ridiculous in their caprices to be tolerated, except in farce; and yet their follies are so flimsy, so motiveless, and fine-spun, as not to be intelligible, or to have any effect in their only proper sphere. Both his principal pieces are said to have suffered by their similarity, first, to Colman's Jealous Wife, and next to the School for Scandal, though in both cases he had the undoubted priority. It is hard that the fate of plagiarism should attend upon originality: yet it is clear that the elements of the School for Scandal are not sparingly scattered in Murphy's comedy of Know your own Mind, which appeared before the latter play, only to be eclipsed by it. This brings me to speak of Sheridan.

Mr. Sheridan has been justly called 'a dramatic star of the first magnitude:' and, indeed, among the comic writers of the last century, he 'shines like Hesperus among the lesser lights.' He has left four several dramas behind him, all different or of different kinds, and all excellent in their way;—the School for Scandal, the Rivals, the Duenna, and the Critic. The attraction of this last piece is, however, less in the mock-tragedy rehearsed, than in the dialogue of the comic scenes, and in the character of Sir Fretful Plagiary, which is supposed to have been intended for Cumberland. If some of the characters in the School for Scandal were contained in Murphy's comedy of Know your own Mind (and certainly some of Dashwoud's detached speeches and satirical sketches are written with quite as firm and masterly a hand as any of those given to the members of the scandalous club, Mrs. Candour or Lady Sneerwell), yet they were buried in it for want of grouping and relief, like the colours of a well-drawn picture sunk in the canvass. Sheridan brought them out, and exhibited them in all their glory. If that gem, the character of Joseph Surface, was Murphy's, the splendid and more valuable setting was Sheridan's. He took Murphy's Malvil from his lurking-place in the closet, and 'dragged the struggling monster into day' upon the stage. That is, he gave interest, life, and action, or, in other words, its dramatic being, to the mere conception and written specimens of a character. This is the merit of Sheridan's comedies, that every thing in them *tells*; there is no labour in vain. His Comic Muse does not go about prying into obscure corners, or collecting idle curiosities, but shews her laughing face, and points to her rich treasure—the follies of mankind. She is garlanded and crowned with roses and vine-leaves. Her eyes sparkle with delight, and her heart runs over with good-natured malice. Her step is firm and light, and her ornaments consummate! The School for Scandal is, if not the most original, perhaps the most finished and faultless comedy which we have. When it is acted, you hear people all around you exclaiming, 'Surely it is impossible for any thing to be cleverer.' The scene in which Charles sells all the old family pictures but his uncle's, who is the purchaser in disguise, and that of the discovery of Lady Teazle when the screen falls, are among the happiest and most highly wrought that comedy, in its wide and brilliant range, can boast. Besides the wit and ingenuity of this play, there is a genial spirit of frankness and generosity about it, that relieves the heart as well as clears the lungs. It professes a faith in the natural goodness, as well as habitual depravity of human nature. While it strips off the mask of hypocrisy, it inspires a confidence between man and man. As often as it is acted, it must serve to clear the air of that low, creeping, pestilent fog of cant and mysticism, which threatens to confound every native impulse, or honest conviction, in the nauseous belief of a perpetual lie, and the laudable profession of systematic hypocrisy.—The character of Lady Teazle is not well made out by the author; nor has it been well represented on the stage since the time of Miss Farren.—The Rivals is a play of even more action and incident, but of less wit and satire than the School for Scandal. It is as good as a novel in the reading, and has the broadest and most palpable effect on the stage. If Joseph Surface and Charles have a smack of Tom Jones and Blifil in their moral constitution, Sir Anthony Absolute and Mrs. Malaprop remind us of honest Matthew Bramble and his sister Tabitha, in their tempers and dialect. Acres is a distant descendant of Sir Andrew Ague-cheek. It must be confessed of this author, as Falstaff says of some one, that 'he had damnable iteration in him!' The Duenna is a perfect work of art. It has the utmost sweetness and point. The plot, the characters, the dialogue, are all complete in themselves, and they are all his own; and the songs are the best that ever were written, except those in the Beggar's Opera. They have a joyous spirit of intoxication in them, and a strain of the most melting tenderness. Compare the softness of that beginning,

> 'Had I heart for falsehood framed,'

with the spirited defiance to Fortune in the lines,

> 'Half thy malice youth could bear,
> And the rest a bumper drown.'

It would have been too much for the author of these elegant and classic productions not to have had some drawbacks on his felicity and fame. But even the applause of nations and the favour of princes cannot always be enjoyed with impunity.—Sheridan was not only an excellent dramatic writer, but a first-rate parliamentary speaker. His characteristics as an orator were manly, unperverted good sense, and keen irony. Wit, which has been thought a two-edged weapon, was by him always employed on the same side of the question—I think, on the right one. His set and more laboured speeches, as that on the Begum's affairs, were proportionably abortive and unimpressive: but no one was equal to him in replying, on the spur of the moment, to pompous absurdity, and unravelling the web of flimsy sophistry. He was the last accomplished debater of the House of Commons.—His character will, however, soon be drawn by one who has all the ability, and every inclination to do him justice; who knows how to bestow praise and to deserve it; by one who is himself an ornament of private and of public life; a satirist, beloved by his friends; a wit and a patriot to-boot; a poet, and an honest man.

Macklin's Man of the World has one powerfully written character, that of Sir Pertinax Macsycophant, but it required Cooke's acting to make it thoroughly effectual.

Mr. Holcroft, in his Road to Ruin, set the example of that style of comedy, in which the *slang* phrases of jockey-noblemen and the humours of the four-in-hand club are blended with the romantic sentiments of distressed damsels and philosophic waiting-maids, and in which he has been imitated by the most successful of our living writers, unless we make a separate class for the school of Cumberland, who was almost entirely devoted to the *comedie larmoyante*, and who, passing from the light, volatile spirit of his West-Indian to the mawkish sensibility of the Wheel of Fortune, linked the Muse of English comedy to the genius of German tragedy, where she has since remained, like Christabel fallen asleep in the Witch's arms, and where I shall leave her, as I have not the poet's privilege to break the spell.

There are two other writers whom I have omitted to mention, but not forgotten: they are our two immortal farce-writers, the authors of the Mayor of Garratt and the Agreeable Surprise. If Foote has been called our English Aristophanes, O'Keeffe might well be called our English Moliere. The scale of the modern writer was smaller, but the spirit is the same. In light, careless laughter, and pleasant exaggerations of the humorous, we have had no one equal to him. There is no labour or contrivance in his scenes, but the drollery of his subject seems to strike irresistibly upon his fancy, and run away with his discretion as it does with ours. His Cowslip and Lingo are Touchstone and Audrey revived. He is himself a Modern Antique. His fancy has all the quaintness and extravagance of the old writers, with the ease and lightness which the moderns arrogate to themseves. All his pieces are delightful, but the Agreeable Surprise is the most so. There are in this some of the most felicitous blunders in situation and character that can be conceived; and in Lingo's superb replication, 'A scholar! I was a master of scholars,' he has hit the height of the ridiculous. Foote had more dry, sarcastic humour, and more knowledge of the world. His farces are bitter satires, more or less personal, as it happened. Mother Cole, in the Minor, and Mr. Smirk the Auctioneer, in Taste, with their coadjutors, are rich cut-and-come-again, 'pleasant, though wrong.' But the Mayor of Garratt is his *magnum opus* in this line. Some comedies are long farces: this farce is a comedy in little. It is also one of the best acted farces that we have. The acting of Dowton and Russell, in Major Sturgeon and Jerry Sneak, cannot be too much praised: Foote himself would have been satisfied with it. The strut, the bluster, the hollow swaggering, and turkey-cock swell of the Major; and Jerry's meekness, meanness, folly, good-nature, and hen-pecked air, are assuredly done to the life. The latter character is even better than the former, which is saying a bold word. Dowton's art is only an imitation of art, of an affected or assumed character; but in Russell's Jerry you see the very soul of nature, in a fellow that is 'pigeon-livered and lacks gall,' laid open and anatomized. You can see that his heart is no bigger than a pin, and his head as soft as a pippin. His whole aspect is chilled and frightened, as if he had been dipped in a pond; and yet he looks as if he would like to be snug and comfortable, if he durst. He smiles as if he would be friends with you upon any terms; and the tears come in his eyes because you will not let him. The tones of his voice are prophetic as the cuckoo's under-song. His words are made of water-gruel. The scene in which he tries to make a confidant of the Major is great; and his song of 'Robinson Crusoe' as melancholy as the island itself. The reconciliation-scene with his wife, and his exclamation over her, 'to think that I should make my Molly *veep*!' are pathetic, if the last stage of human infirmity is so. This farce appears to me to be both moral and entertaining; yet it does not take. It is considered as an unjust satire on the city, and the country at large; and there is a very frequent repetition of the word 'nonsense' in the house, during the performance. Mr. Dowton was even hissed, either from the upper boxes or gallery, in his speech recounting the marching of his corps 'from Brentford to Ealing, and from Ealing to Acton;' and several persons in the pit, who thought the whole *low*, were for going out. This shows well for the progress of civilization. I suppose the manners described in the Mayor of Garratt have, in the last forty years, become obsolete, and the characters ideal: we have no longer either hen-pecked or brutal husbands, or domineering wives; the Miss Molly Jollops no longer wed Jerry Sneaks, or admire the brave Major Sturgeons on the other side of Temple-bar; all our soldiers have become heroes, and our magistrates respectable, and the farce of life is o'er.

One more name, and I have done. It is that of Peter Pindar. The historian of Sir Joseph Banks and the Emperor of Morocco, of the Pilgrims and the Peas, of the Royal Academy, and of Mr. Whitbread's brewing-vat, the bard in whom the nation and the king delighted, is old and blind, but still merry and wise:—remembering how he has made the world laugh in his time, and not repenting of the mirth he has given; with an involuntary smile lighted up at the mad pranks of his Muse, and the lucky hits of his pen—'faint picture of those flashes of his spirit, that were wont to set the table in a roar;' like his own Expiring Taper, bright and fitful to the last; tagging a rhyme or conning his own epitaph; and waiting for the last summons, GRATEFUL and CONTENTED! [1]

I have thus gone through the history of that part of our literature, which I had proposed to myself to treat of. I have only to add, by way of explanation, that in some few parts I had anticipated myself in fugitive or periodical publications; and I thought it better to repeat what I had already stated to the best of my ability, than alter it for the worse. These parts bear, however, a very small proportion to the whole; and I have used such diligence and care as I could, in adding to them whatever appeared necessary to complete the general view of the subject, or make it (as far as lay in my power) interesting to others.

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[1] This ingenious and popular writer is since dead.

End of LECTURES ON THE ENGLISH COMIC WRITERS

FUGITIVE WRITINGS

FUGITIVE WRITINGS

THE FIGHT

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*February*, 1822.

'——The *fight*, the *fight*'s the thing,
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.'

Where there's a will, there's a way.—I said so to myself, as I walked down Chancery-lane, about half-past six o'clock on Monday the 10th of December, to inquire at Jack Randall's where the fight the next day was to be; and I found 'the proverb' nothing 'musty' in the present instance. I was determined to see this fight, come what would, and see it I did, in great style. It was my *first fight*, yet it more than answered my expectations. Ladies! it is to you I dedicate this description; nor let it seem out of character for the fair to notice the exploits of the brave. Courage and modesty are the old English virtues; and may they never look cold and askance on one another! Think, ye fairest of the fair, loveliest of the lovely kind, ye practisers of soft enchantment, how many more ye kill with poisoned baits than ever fell in the ring; and listen with subdued air and without shuddering, to a tale tragic only in appearance, and sacred to the FANCY!

I was going down Chancery-lane, thinking to ask at Jack Randall's where the fight was to be, when looking through the glass-door of the *Hole in the Wall*, I heard a gentleman asking the same question *at* Mrs. Randall, as the author of Waverley would express it. Now Mrs. Randall stood answering the gentleman's question, with the authenticity of the lady of the Champion of the Light Weights. Thinks I, I'll wait till this person comes out, and learn from him how it is. For to say a truth, I was not fond of going into this house of call for heroes and philosophers, ever since the owner of it (for Jack is no gentleman) threatened once upon a time to kick me out of doors for wanting a mutton-chop at his hospitable board, when the conqueror in thirteen battles was more full of *blue ruin* than of good manners. I was the more mortified at this repulse, inasmuch as I had heard Mr. James Simpkins, hosier in the Strand, one day when the character of the *Hole in the Wall* was brought in question, observe—'The house is a very good house, and the company quite genteel: I have been there myself!' Remembering this unkind treatment of mine host, to which mine hostess was also a party, and not wishing to put her in unquiet thoughts at a time jubilant like the present, I waited at the door, when, who should issue forth but my friend Jo. Toms, and turning suddenly up Chancery-lane with that quick jerk and impatient stride which distinguishes a lover of the Fancy, I said, 'I'll be hanged if that fellow is not going to the fight, and is on his way to get me to go with him.' So it proved in effect, and we agreed to adjourn to my lodgings to discuss measures with that cordiality which makes old friends like new, and new friends like old, on great occasions. We are cold to others only when we are dull in ourselves, and have neither thoughts nor feelings to impart to them. Give a man a topic in his head, a throb of pleasure in his heart, and he will be glad to share it with the first person he meets. Toms and I, though we seldom meet, were an *alter idem* on this memorable occasion, and had not an idea that we did not candidly impart; and 'so carelessly did we fleet the time,' that I wish no better, when there is another fight, than to have him for a companion on my journey down, and to return with my friend Jack Pigott, talking of what was to happen or of what did happen, with a noble subject always at hand, and liberty to digress to others whenever they offered. Indeed, on my repeating the lines from Spenser in an involuntary fit of enthusiasm,

> 'What more felicity can fall to creature,
> Than to enjoy delight with liberty?'

my last-named ingenious friend stopped me by saying that this, translated into the vulgate, meant '*Going to see a fight.*'

Jo. Toms and I could not settle about the method of going down. He said there was a caravan, he understood, to start from Tom Belcher's at two, which would go there *right out* and back again the next day. Now I never travel all night, and said I should get a cast to Newbury by one of the mails. Jo. swore the thing was impossible, and I could only answer that I had made up my mind to it. In short, he seemed to me to waver, said he only came to see if I was going, had letters to write, a cause coming on the day after, and faintly said at parting (for I was bent on setting out that moment)—'Well, we meet at Philippi!' I made the best of my way to Piccadilly. The mail coach stand was bare. 'They are all gone,' said I—'this is always the way with me—in the instant I lose the future—if I had not stayed to pour out that last cup of tea, I should have been just in time'—and cursing my folly and ill-luck together, without inquiring at the coach-office whether the mails were gone or not, I walked on in despite, and to punish my own dilatoriness and want of determination. At any rate, I would not turn back: I might get to Hounslow, or perhaps farther, to be on my road the next morning. I passed Hyde Park Corner (my Rubicon), and trusted to fortune. Suddenly I heard the clattering of a Brentford stage, and the fight rushed full upon my fancy. I argued (not unwisely) that even a Brentford coachman was better company than my own thoughts (such as they were just then), and at his invitation mounted the box with him. I immediately stated my case to him—namely, my quarrel with myself for missing the Bath or Bristol mail, and my determination to get on in consequence as well as I could, without any disparagement or insulting comparison between longer or shorter stages. It is a maxim with me that stage-coaches, and consequently stage-coachmen, are respectable in proportion to the distance they have to travel: so I said nothing on that subject to my Brentford friend. Any incipient tendency to an abstract proposition, or (as he might have construed it) to a personal reflection of this kind, was however nipped in the bud; for I had no sooner declared indignantly that I had missed the mails, than he flatly denied that they were gone along, and lo! at the instant three of them drove by in rapid, provoking, orderly succession, as if they would devour the ground before them. Here again I seemed in the contradictory situation of the man in Dryden who exclaims,

> 'I follow Fate, which does too hard pursue!'

If I had stopped to inquire at the White Horse Cellar, which would not have taken me a minute, I should now have been driving down the road in all the dignified unconcern and *ideal* perfection of mechanical conveyance. The Bath mail I had set my mind upon, and I had missed it, as I missed every thing else, by my own absurdity, in putting the will for the deed, and aiming at ends without employing means. 'Sir,' said he of the Brentford, 'the Bath mail will be up presently, my brother-in-law drives it, and I will engage to stop him if there is a place empty.' I almost doubted my good genius; but, sure enough, up it drove like lightning, and stopped directly at the call of the Brentford Jehu. I would not have believed this possible, but the brother-in-law of a mail-coach driver is himself no mean man. I was transferred without loss of time from the top of one coach to that of the other, desired the guard to pay my fare to the Brentford coachman for me as I had no change, was accommodated with a great coat, put up my umbrella to keep off a drizzling mist, and we began to cut through the air like an arrow. The mile-stones disappeared one after another, the rain kept off; Tom Turtle, the trainer, sat before me on the coach-box, with whom I exchanged civilities as a gentleman going to the fight; the passion that had transported me an hour before was subdued to pensive regret and conjectural musing on the next day's battle; I was promised a place inside at Reading, and upon the whole, I thought myself a lucky fellow. Such is the force of imagination! On the outside of any other coach on the 10th of December, with a Scotch mist drizzling through the cloudy moonlight air, I should have been cold, comfortless, impatient, and, no doubt, wet through; but seated on the Royal mail, I felt warm and comfortable, the air did me good, the ride did me good, I was pleased with the progress we had made, and confident that all would go well through the journey. When I got inside at Reading, I found Turtle and a stout valetudinarian, whose costume bespoke him one of the Fancy, and who had risen from a three months' sick bed to get into the mail to see the fight. They were intimate, and we fell into a lively discourse. My friend the trainer was confined in his topics to fighting dogs and men, to bears and badgers; beyond this he was 'quite chap-fallen,' had not a word to throw at a dog, or indeed very wisely fell asleep, when any other game was started. The whole art of training (I, however, learnt from him,) consists in two things, exercise and abstinence, abstinence and exercise, repeated alternately and without end. A yolk of an egg with a spoonful of rum in it is the first thing in a morning, and then a walk of six miles till breakfast. This meal consists of a plentiful supply of tea and toast and beef-steaks. Then another six or seven miles till dinner-time, and another supply of solid beef or mutton with a pint of porter, and perhaps, at the utmost, a couple of glasses of sherry. Martin trains on water, but this increases his infirmity on another very dangerous side. The Gas-man takes now and then a chirping glass (under the rose) to console him, during a six weeks' probation, for the absence of Mrs. Hickman—an agreeable woman, with (I understand) a pretty fortune of two hundred pounds. How matter presses on me! What stubborn things are facts! How inexhaustible is nature and art! 'It is well,' as I once heard Mr. Richmond observe, 'to see a variety.' He was speaking of cock-fighting as an edifying spectacle. I cannot deny but that one learns more of what *is* (I do not say of what *ought to be*) in this desultory mode of practical study, than from reading the same book twice over, even though it should be a moral treatise. Where was I? I was sitting at dinner with the candidate for the honours of the ring, 'where good digestion waits on appetite, and health on both.' Then follows an hour of social chat and native glee; and afterwards, to another breathing over heathy hill or dale. Back to supper, and then to bed, and up by six again—Our hero

'Follows so the ever-running sun
With profitable *ardour*'—

to the day that brings him victory or defeat in the green fairy circle. Is not this life more sweet than mine? I was going to say; but I will not libel any life by comparing it to mine, which is (at the date of these presents) bitter as coloquintida and the dregs of aconitum!

The invalid in the Bath mail soared a pitch above the trainer, and did not sleep so sound, because he had 'more figures and more fantasies.' We talked the hours away merrily. He had faith in surgery, for he had had three ribs set right, that had been broken in a *turn-up* at Belcher's, but thought physicians old women, for they had no antidote in their catalogue for brandy. An indigestion is an excellent common-place for two people that never met before. By way of ingratiating myself, I told him the story of my doctor, who, on my earnestly representing to him that I thought his regimen had done me harm, assured me that the whole pharmacopeia contained nothing comparable to the prescription he had given me; and, as a proof of its undoubted efficacy, said, that, 'he had had one gentleman with my complaint under his hands for the last fifteen years.' This anecdote made my companion shake the rough sides of his three great coats with boisterous laughter; and Turtle, starting out of his sleep, swore he knew how the fight would go, for he had had a dream about it. Sure enough the rascal told us how the three first rounds went off, but 'his dream,' like others, 'denoted a foregone conclusion.' He knew his men. The moon now rose in silver state, and I ventured, with some hesitation, to point out this object of placid beauty, with the blue serene beyond, to the man of science, to which his ear he 'seriously inclined,' the more as it gave promise *d'un beau jour* for the morrow, and showed the ring undrenched by envious showers, arrayed in sunny smiles. Just then, all going on well, I thought on my friend Toms, whom I had left behind, and said innocently, 'There was a blockhead of a fellow I left in town, who said there was no possibility of getting down by the mail, and talked of going by a caravan from Belcher's at two in the morning, after he had written some letters.' 'Why,' said he of the lapells, 'I should not wonder if that was the very person we saw running about like mad from one coach-door to another, and asking if any one had seen a friend of his, a gentlemen going to the fight, whom he had missed stupidly enough by staying to write a note.' 'Pray, Sir,' said my fellow-traveller, 'had he a plaid-cloak on?'—'Why, no,' said I, 'not at the time I left him, but he very well might afterwards, for he offered to lend me one.' The plaid-cloak and the letter decided the thing. Joe, sure enough, was in the Bristol mail, which preceded us by about fifty yards. This was droll enough. We had now but a few miles to our place of destination, and the first thing I did on alighting at Newbury, both coaches stopping at the same time, was to call out, 'Pray, is there a gentleman in that mail of the name of Toms?' 'No,' said Joe, borrowing something of the vein of Gilpin, 'for I have just got out.' 'Well!' says he, 'this is lucky; but you don't know how vexed I was to miss you; for,' added he, lowering his voice, 'do you know when I left you I went to Belcher's to ask about the caravan, and Mrs. Belcher said very obligingly, she couldn't tell about that, but there were two gentlemen who had taken places by the mail and were gone on in a landau, and she could frank us. It 's a pity I didn't meet with you; we could then have got down for nothing. But *mum 's the word.*' It 's the devil for any one to tell me a secret, for it 's sure to come out in print. I do not care so much to gratify a friend, but the public ear is too great a temptation to me.

Our present business was to get beds and a supper at an inn; but this was no easy task. The public-houses were full, and where you saw a light at a private house, and people poking their heads out of the casement to see what was going on, they instantly put them in and shut the window, the moment you seemed advancing with a suspicious overture for accommodation. Our guard and coachman thundered away at the outer gate of the Crown for some time without effect—such was the greater noise within;—and when the doors were unbarred, and we got admittance, we found a party assembled in the kitchen round a good hospitable fire, some sleeping, others drinking, others talking on politics and on the fight. A tall English yeoman (something like Matthews in the face, and quite as great a wag)—

> 'A lusty man to ben an abbot able,'—

was making such a prodigious noise about rent and taxes, and the price of corn now and formerly, that he had prevented us from being heard at the gate. The first thing I heard him say was to a shuffling fellow who wanted to be off a bet for a shilling glass of brandy and water—'Confound it, man, don't be *insipid*!' Thinks I, that is a good phrase. It was a good omen. He kept it up so all night, nor flinched with the approach of morning. He was a fine fellow, with sense, wit, and spirit, a hearty body and a joyous mind, free-spoken, frank, convivial—one of that true English breed that went with Harry the Fifth to the siege of Harfleur—'standing like greyhounds in the slips,' &c. We ordered tea and eggs (beds were soon found to be out of the question) and this fellow's conversation was *sauce piquante*. It did one's heart good to see him brandish his oaken towel and to hear him talk. He made mince-meat of a drunken, stupid, red-faced, quarrelsome, *frowsy* farmer, whose nose 'he moralized into a thousand similes,' making it out a firebrand like Bardolph's. 'I'll tell you what my friend,' says he, 'the landlady has only to keep you here to save fire and candle. If one was to touch your nose, it would go off like a piece of charcoal.' At this the other only grinned like an idiot, the sole variety in his purple face being his little peering grey eyes and yellow teeth; called for another glass, swore he would not stand it; and after many attempts to provoke his humourous antagonist to single combat, which the other turned off (after working him up to a ludicrous pitch of choler) with great adroitness, he fell quietly asleep with a glass of liquor in his hand, which he could not lift to his head. His laughing persecutor made a speech over him, and turning to the opposite side of the room, where they were all sleeping in the midst of this 'loud and furious fun,' said, 'There's a scene, by G—d, for Hogarth to paint. I think he and Shakspeare were our two best men at copying life.' This confirmed me in my good opinion of him. Hogarth, Shakspeare, and Nature, were just enough for him (indeed for any man) to know. I said, 'You read Cobbett, don't you? At least,' says I, 'you talk just as well as he writes.' He seemed to doubt this. But I said, 'We have an hour to spare: if you'll get pen, ink, and paper, and keep on talking, I'll write down what you say; and if it doesn't make a capital 'Political Register,' I'll forfeit my head. You have kept me alive to-night, however. I don't know what I should have done without you.' He did not dislike this view of the thing, nor my asking if he was not about the size of Jem Belcher; and told me soon afterwards, in the confidence of friendship, that 'the circumstance which had given him nearly the greatest concern in his life, was Cribb's beating Jem after he had lost his eye by racket-playing.'—The morning dawns; that dim but yet clear light appears, which weighs like solid bars of metal on the sleepless eyelids; the guests drop down from their chambers one by one—but it was too late to think of going to bed now (the clock was on the stroke of seven), we had nothing for it but to find a barber's (the pole that glittered in the morning sun lighted us to his shop), and then a nine miles' march to Hungerford. The day was fine, the sky was blue, the mists were retiring from the marshy ground, the path was tolerably dry, the sitting-up all night had not done us much harm—at least the cause was good; we talked of this and that with amicable difference, roving and sipping of many subjects, but still invariably we returned to the fight. At length, a mile to the left of Hungerford, on a gentle eminence, we saw the ring surrounded by covered carts, gigs, and carriages, of which hundreds had passed us on the road; Toms gave a youthful shout, and we hastened down a narrow lane to the scene of action.

Reader, have you ever seen a fight? If not, you have a pleasure to come, at least if it is a fight like that between the Gas-man and Bill Neate. The crowd was very great when we arrived on the spot; open carriages were coming up, with streamers flying and music playing, and the country-people were pouring in over hedge and ditch in all directions, to see their hero beat or be beaten. The odds were still on Gas, but only about five to four. Gully had been down to try Neate, and had backed him considerably, which was a damper to the sanguine confidence of the adverse party. About two hundred thousand pounds were pending. The Gas says, he has lost 3000*l.* which were promised him by different gentlemen if he had won. He had presumed too much on himself, which had made others presume on him. This spirited and formidable young fellow seems to have taken for his motto the old maxim, that 'there are three things necessary to success in life—*Impudence! Impudence! Impudence!*' It is so in matters of opinion, but not in the *Fancy*, which is the most practical of all things, though even here confidence is half the battle, but only half. Our friend had vapoured and swaggered too much, as if he wanted to grin and bully his adversary out of the fight. 'Alas! the Bristol man was not so tamed!'—'This is *the grave-digger*' (would Tom Hickman exclaim in the moments of intoxication from gin and success, shewing his tremendous right hand), 'this will send many of them to their long homes; I haven't done with them yet!' Why should he—though he had licked four of the best men within the hour, yet why should he threaten to inflict dishonourable chastisement on my old master Richmond, a veteran going off the stage, and who has borne his sable honours meekly? Magnanimity, my dear Tom, and bravery, should be inseparable. Or why should he go up to his antagonist, the first time he ever saw him at the Fives Court, and measuring him from head to foot with a glance of contempt, as Achilles surveyed Hector, say to him, 'What, are you Bill Neate? I'll knock more blood out of that great carcase of thine, this day fortnight, than you ever knock'd out of a bullock's!' It was not manly, 'twas not fighter-like. If he was sure of the victory (as he was not), the less said about it the better. Modesty should accompany the *Fancy* as its shadow. The best men were always the best behaved. Jem Belcher, the Game Chicken (before whom the Gas-man could not have lived) were civil, silent men. So is Cribb, so is Tom Belcher, the most elegant of sparrers, and not a man for every one to take by the nose. I enlarged on this topic in the mail (while Turtle was asleep), and said very wisely (as I thought) that impertinence was a part of no profession. A boxer was bound to beat his man, but not to thrust his fist, either actually or by implication, in every one's face. Even a highwayman, in the way of trade, may blow out your brains, but if he uses foul language at the same time, I should say he was no gentleman. A boxer, I would infer, need not be a blackguard or a coxcomb, more than another. Perhaps I press this point too much on a fallen man—Mr. Thomas Hickman has by this time learnt that first of all lessons, 'That man was made to mourn.' He has lost nothing by the late fight but his presumption; and that every man may do as well without! By an over-display of this quality, however, the public had been prejudiced against him, and the *knowing-ones* were taken in. Few but those who had bet on him wished Gas to win. With my own prepossessions on the subject, the result of the 11th of December appeared to me as fine a piece of poetical justice as I had ever witnessed. The difference of weight between the two combatants (14 stone to 12) was nothing to the sporting men. Great, heavy, clumsy, long-armed Bill Neate kicked the beam in the scale of the Gas-man's vanity. The amateurs were frightened at his big words, and thought that they would make up for the difference of six feet and five feet nine. Truly, the FANCY are not men of imagination. They judge of what has been, and cannot conceive of any thing that is to be. The Gas-man had won hitherto; therefore he must beat a man half as big again as himself—and that to a certainty. Besides, there are as many feuds, factions, prejudices, pedantic notions in the FANCY as in the state or in the schools. Mr. Gully is almost the only cool, sensible man among them, who exercises an unbiassed discretion, and is not a slave to his passions in these matters. But enough of reflections, and to our tale. The day, as I have said, was fine for a December morning. The grass was wet, and the ground miry, and ploughed up with multitudinous feet, except that, within the ring itself, there was a spot of virgin-green closed in and unprofaned by vulgar tread, that shone with dazzling brightness in the mid-day sun. For it was now noon, and we had an hour to wait. This is the trying time. It is then the heart sickens, as you think what the two champions are about, and how short a time will determine their fate. After the first blow is struck, there is no opportunity for nervous apprehensions; you are swallowed up in the immediate interest of the scene—but

> ‘Between the acting of a dreadful thing
> And the first motion, all the interim is
> Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.’

I found it so as I felt the sun’s rays clinging to my back, and saw the white wintry clouds sink below the verge of the horizon. ‘So, I thought, my fairest hopes have faded from my sight!—so will the Gas-man’s glory, or that of his adversary, vanish in an hour.’ The *swells* were parading in their white box-coats, the outer ring was cleared with some bruises on the heads and shins of the rustic assembly (for the *cockneys* had been distanced by the sixty-six miles); the time drew near, I had got a good stand; a bustle, a buzz, ran through the crowd, and from the opposite side entered Neate, between his second and bottle-holder. He rolled along, swathed in his loose great coat, his knock-knees bending under his huge bulk; and, with a modest cheerful air, threw his hat into the ring. He then just looked round, and began quietly to undress; when from the other side there was a similar rush and an opening made, and the Gas-man came forward with a conscious air of anticipated triumph, too much like the cock-of-the walk. He strutted about more than became a hero, sucked oranges with a supercilious air, and threw away the skin with a toss of his head, and went up and looked at Neate, which was an act of supererogation. The only sensible thing he did was, as he strode away from the modern Ajax, to fling out his arms, as if he wanted to try whether they would do their work that day. By this time they had stripped, and presented a strong contrast in appearance. If Neate was like Ajax, ‘with Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear’ the pugilistic reputation of all Bristol, Hickman might be compared to Diomed, light, vigorous, elastic, and his back glistened in the sun, as he moved about, like a panther’s hide. There was now a dead pause—attention was awe-struck. Who at that moment, big with a great event, did not draw his breath short—did not feel his heart throb? All was ready. They tossed up for the sun, and the Gas-man won. They were led up to the *scratch*—shook hands, and went at it.

In the first round every one thought it was all over. After making play a short time, the Gas-man flew at his adversary like a tiger, struck five blows in as many seconds, three first, and then following him as he staggered back, two more, right and left, and down he fell, a mighty ruin. There was a shout, and I said, ‘There is no standing this.' Neate seemed like a lifeless lump of flesh and bone, round which the Gas-man's blows played with the rapidity of electricity or lightning, and you imagined he would only be lifted up to be knocked down again. It was as if Hickman held a sword or a fire in that right hand of his, and directed it against an unarmed body. They met again, and Neate seemed, not cowed, but particularly cautious. I saw his teeth clenched together and his brows knit close against the sun. He held out both his arms at full length straight before him, like two sledge-hammers, and raised his left an inch or two higher. The Gas-man could not get over this guard—they struck mutually and fell, but without advantage on either side. It was the same in the next round; but the balance of power was thus restored—the fate of the battle was suspended. No one could tell how it would end. This was the only moment in which opinion was divided; for, in the next, the Gas-man aiming a mortal blow at his adversary's neck, with his right hand, and failing from the length he had to reach, the other returned it with his left at full swing, planted a tremendous blow on his cheek-bone and eyebrow, and made a red ruin of that side of his face. The Gas-man went down, and there was another shout—a roar of triumph as the waves of fortune rolled tumultuously from side to side. This was a settler. Hickman got up, and 'grinned horrible a ghastly smile,' yet he was evidently dashed in his opinion of himself; it was the first time he had ever been so punished; all one side of his face was perfect scarlet, and his right eye was closed in dingy blackness, as he advanced to the fight, less confident, but still determined. After one or two rounds, not receiving another such remembrancer, he rallied and went at it with his former impetuosity. But in vain. His strength had been weakened,—his blows could not tell at such a distance,—he was obliged to fling himself at his adversary, and could not strike from his feet; and almost as regularly as he flew at him with his right hand, Neate warded the blow, or drew back out of its reach, and felled him with the return of his left. There was little cautious sparring—no half-hits—no tapping and trifling, none of the *petit-maitreship* of the art—they were almost all knock-down blows:—the fight was a good stand-up fight. The wonder was the half-minute time. If there had been a minute or more allowed between each round, it would have been intelligible how they should by degrees recover strength and resolution; but to see two men smashed to the ground, smeared with gore, stunned, senseless, the breath beaten out of their bodies; and then, before you recover from the shock, to see them rise up with new strength and courage, stand steady to inflict or receive mortal offence, and rush upon each other 'like two clouds over the Caspian'—this is the most astonishing thing of all:—this is the high and heroic state of man! From this time forward the event became more certain every round; and about the twelfth it seemed as if it must have been over. Hickman generally stood with his back to me; but in the scuffle, he had changed positions, and Neate just then made a tremendous lunge at him, and hit him full in the face. It was doubtful whether he would fall backwards or forwards; he hung suspended for a second or two, and then fell back, throwing his hands in the air, and with his face lifted up to the sky. I never saw any thing more terrific than his aspect just before he fell. All traces of life, of natural expression, were gone from him. His face was like a human skull, a death's head, spouting blood. The eyes were filled with blood, the nose streamed with blood, the mouth gaped blood. He was not like an actual man, but like a preternatural, spectral appearance, or like one of the figures in Dante's *Inferno*. Yet he fought on after this for several rounds, still striking the first desperate blow, and Neate standing on the defensive, and using the same cautious guard to the last, as if he had still all his work to do; and it was not till the Gas-man was so stunned in the seventeenth or eighteenth round, that his senses forsook him, and he could not come to time, that the battle was declared over.[1] Ye who despise the Fancy, do something to shew as much *pluck*, or as much self-possession as this, before you assume a superiority which you have never given a single proof of by any one action in the whole course of your lives!—When the Gas-man came to himself, the first words he uttered were, 'Where am I? What is the matter?' 'Nothing is the matter, Tom,—you have lost the battle, but you are the bravest man alive.' And Jackson whispered to him, 'I am collecting a purse for you, Tom.'—Vain sounds, and unheard at that moment! Neate instantly went up and shook him cordially by the hand, and seeing some old acquaintance, began to flourish with his fists, calling out, 'Ah you always said I couldn't fight—What do you think now?' But all in good humour, and without any appearance of arrogance; only it was evident Bill Neate was pleased that he had won the fight. When it was over, I asked Cribb if he did not think it was a good one? He said, '*Pretty well!*' The carrier-pigeons now mounted into the air, and one of them flew with the news of her husband's victory to the bosom of Mrs. Neate. Alas, for Mrs. Hickman!

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[1] Scroggins said of the Gas-man, that he thought he was a man of that courage, that if his hands were cut off, he would still fight on with the stumps—like that of Widrington,—

———'In doleful dumps,
Who, when his legs were smitten off
Still fought upon his stumps.'

Mais au revoir, as Sir Fopling Flutter says. I went down with Toms; I returned with Jack Pigott, whom I met on the ground. Toms is a rattle brain; Pigott is a sentimentalist. Now, under favour, I am a sentimentalist too—therefore I say nothing, but that the interest of the excursion did not flag as I came back. Pigott and I marched along the causeway leading from Hungerford to Newbury, now observing the effect of a brilliant sun on the tawny meads or moss-coloured cottages, now exulting in the fight, now digressing to some topic of general and elegant literature. My friend was dressed in character for the occasion, or like one of the FANCY; that is, with a double portion of great coats, clogs, and overhauls: and just as we had agreed with a couple of country-lads to carry his superfluous wearing-apparel to the next town, we were overtaken by a return post-chaise, into which I got, Pigott preferring a seat on the bar. There were two strangers already in the chaise, and on their observing they supposed I had been to the fight, I said I had, and concluded they had done the same. They appeared, however, a little shy and sore on the subject; and it was not till after several hints dropped, and questions put, that it turned out that they had missed it. One of these friends had undertaken to drive the other there in his gig: they had set out, to make sure work, the day before at three in the afternoon. The owner of the one-horse vehicle scorned to ask his way, and drove right on to Bagshot, instead of turning off at Hounslow: there they stopped all night, and set off the next day across the country to Reading, from whence they took coach, and got down within a mile or two of Hungerford, just half an hour after the fight was over. This might be safely set down as one of the miseries of human life. We parted with these two gentlemen who had been to see the fight, but had returned as they went, at Wolhampton, where we were promised beds (an irresistible temptation, for Pigott had passed the preceding night at Hungerford as we had done at Newbury), and we turned into an old bow-windowed parlour with a carpet and a snug fire; and after devouring a quantity of tea, toast, and eggs, sat down to consider, during an hour of philosophic leisure, what we should have for supper. In the midst of an Epicurean deliberation between a roasted fowl and mutton chops with mashed potatoes, we were interrupted by an inroad of Goths and Vandals—*O procul este profani*—not real flash-men, but interlopers, noisy pretenders, butchers from Tothill-fields, brokers from Whitechapel, who called immediately for pipes and tobacco, hoping it would not be disagreeable to the gentlemen, and began to insist that it was *a cross*. Pigott withdrew from the smoke and noise into another room, and left me to dispute the point with them for a couple of hours *sans intermission* by the dial. The next morning we rose refreshed; and on observing that Jack had a pocket volume in his hand, in which he read in the intervals of our discourse, I inquired what it was, and learned to my particular satisfaction that it was a volume of the New Eloise. Ladies, after this, will you contend that a love for the FANCY is incompatible with the cultivation of sentiment?—We jogged on as before, my friend setting me up in a genteel drab great coat and green silk handkerchief (which I must say became me exceedingly), and after stretching our legs for a few miles, and seeing Jack Randall, Ned Turner, and Scroggins, pass on the top of one of the Bath coaches, we engaged with the driver of the second to take us to London for the usual fee. I got inside, and found three other passengers. One of them was an old gentleman with an aquiline nose, powdered hair, and a pigtail, and who looked as if he had played many a rubber at the Bath rooms. I said to myself, he is very like Mr. Windham; I wish he would enter into conversation, that I might hear what fine observations would come from those finely-turned features. However, nothing passed, till, stopping to dine at Reading, some inquiry was made by the company about the fight, and I gave (as the reader may believe) an eloquent and animated description of it. When we got into the coach again, the old gentleman, after a graceful exordium, said, he had, when a boy, been to a fight between the famous Broughton and George Stevenson, who was called the *Fighting Coachman*, in the year 1770, with the late Mr. Windham. This beginning flattered the spirit of prophecy within me and rivetted my attention. He went on—'George Stevenson was coachman to a friend of my father's. He was an old man when I saw him some years afterwards. He took hold of his own arm and said, "there was muscle here once, but now it is no more than this young gentleman's." He added, "well, no matter; I have been here long, I am willing to go hence, and I hope I have done no more harm than another man." Once,' said my unknown companion, 'I asked him if he had ever beat Broughton? He said Yes; that he had fought with him three times, and the last time he fairly beat him, though the world did not allow it. "I'll tell you how it was, master. When the seconds lifted us up in the last round, we were so exhausted that neither of us could stand, and we fell upon one another, and as Master Broughton fell uppermost, the mob gave it in his favour, and he was said to have won the battle. But," says he, "the fact was, that as his second (John Cuthbert) lifted him up, he said to him, 'I'll fight no more, I've had enough;'

"which," says Stevenson, "you know gave me the victory. And to prove to you that this was the case, when John Cuthbert was on his death-bed, and they asked him if there was any thing on his mind which he wished to confess, he answered, 'Yes, that there was one thing he wished to set right, for that certainly Master Stevenson won that last fight with Master Broughton; for he whispered him as he lifted him up in the last round of all, that he had had enough.'"' 'This,' said the Bath gentleman, 'was a bit of human nature;' and I have written this account of the fight on purpose that it might not be lost to the world. He also stated as a proof of the candour of mind in this class of men, that Stevenson acknowledged that Broughton could have beat him in his best day; but that he (Broughton) was getting old in their last rencounter. When we stopped in Piccadilly, I wanted to ask the gentleman some questions about the late Mr. Windham, but had not courage. I got out, resigned my coat and green silk handkerchief to Pigott (loth to part with these ornaments of life), and walked home in high spirits.

P.S. Toms called upon me the next day, to ask me if I did not think the fight was a complete thing? I said I thought it was. I hope he will relish my account of it.

MERRY ENGLAND

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*December*, 1825.

'St. George for merry England!'

THIS old-fashioned epithet might be supposed to have been bestowed ironically, or on the old principle—*Ut lucus a non lucendo.* Yet there is something in the sound that hits the fancy, and a sort of truth beyond appearances. To be sure, it is from a dull, homely ground that the gleams of mirth and jollity break out; but the streaks of light that tinge the evening sky are not the less striking on that account. The beams of the morning-sun shining on the lonely glades, or through the idle branches of the tangled forest, the leisure, the freedom, 'the pleasure of going and coming without knowing where,' the troops of wild deer, the sports of the chase, and other rustic gambols, were sufficient to justify the well-known appellation of 'Merry Sherwood,' and in like manner, we may apply the phrase to *Merry England.* The smile is not the less sincere because it does not always play upon the cheek; and the jest is not the less welcome, nor the laugh less hearty, because they happen to be a relief from care or leaden-eyed melancholy. The instances are the more precious as they are rare;

and we look forward to them with the greater good will, or back upon them with the greater gratitude, as we drain the last drop in the cup with particular relish. If not always gay or in good spirits, we are glad when any occasion draws us out of our natural gloom, and disposed to make the most of it. We may say with *Silence* in the play, 'I have been merry once ere now,'—and this once was to serve him all his life; for he was a person of wonderful silence and gravity, though 'he chirped over his cups,' and announced with characteristic glee that 'there were pippins and cheese to come.' *Silence* was in this sense a merry man, that is, he would be merry if he could, and a very great economy of wit, like very slender fare, was a banquet to him, from the simplicity of his taste and habits. 'Continents,' says Hobbes, 'have most of what they contain'—and in this view it may be contended that the English are the merriest people in the world, since they only show it on high-days and holidays. They are then like a school-boy let loose from school, or like a dog that has slipped his collar. They are not gay like the French, who are one eternal smile of self-complacency, tortured into affectation, or spun into languid indifference, nor are they voluptuous and immersed in sensual indolence, like the Italians; but they have that sort of intermittent, fitful, irregular gaiety, which is neither worn out by habit, nor deadened by passion, but is sought with avidity as it takes the mind by surprise, is startled by a sense of oddity and incongruity, indulges its wayward humours or lively impulses, with perfect freedom and lightness of heart, and seizes occasion by the forelock, that it may return to serious business with more cheerfulness, and have something to beguile the hours of thought or sadness. I do not see how there can be high spirits without low ones; and every thing has its price according to circumstances. Perhaps we have to pay a heavier tax on pleasure, than some others: what skills it, so long as our good spirits and good hearts enable us to bear it?

'They' (the English), says Froissart, 'amused themselves sadly after the fashion of their country'—*ils se rejouissoient tristement selon la coutume de leur pays*. They have indeed a way of their own. Their mirth is a relaxation from gravity, a challenge to dull care to be gone; and one is not always clear at first, whether the appeal is successful. The cloud may still hang on the brow; the ice may not thaw at once. To help them out in their new character is an act of charity. Any thing short of hanging or drowning is something to begin with. They do not enter into their amusements the less doggedly because they may plague others. They like a thing the better for hitting them a rap on the knuckles, for making their blood tingle. They do not dance or sing, but they make good cheer—'eat, drink, and are merry.' No people are fonder of field-sports, Christmas gambols, or practical jests. Blindman's-buff, hunt-the-slipper, hot-cockles, and snap-dragon, are all approved English games, full of laughable surprises and 'hair-breadth 'scapes,' and serve to amuse the winter fire-side after the roast-beef and plum-pudding, the spiced ale and roasted crab, thrown (hissing-hot) into the foaming tankard. Punch (not the liquor, but the puppet) is not, I fear, of English origin; but there is no place, I take it, where he finds himself more at home or meets a more joyous welcome, where he collects greater crowds at the corners of streets, where he opens the eyes or distends the cheeks wider, or where the bangs and blows, the uncouth gestures, ridiculous anger and screaming voice of the chief performer excite more boundless merriment or louder bursts of laughter among all ranks and sorts of people. An English theatre is the very throne of pantomime; nor do I believe that the gallery and boxes of Drury-lane or Covent-garden filled on the proper occasions with holiday folks (big or little) yield the palm for undisguised, tumultuous, inextinguishable laughter to any spot in Europe. I do not speak of the refinement of the mirth (this is no fastidious speculation) but of its cordiality, on the return of these long looked-for and licensed periods; and I may add here, by way of illustration, that the English common people are a sort of grown children, spoiled and sulky perhaps, but full of glee and merriment, when their attention is drawn off by some sudden and striking object. The May-pole is almost gone out of fashion among us: but May-day, besides its flowering hawthorns and its pearly dews, has still its boasted exhibition of painted chimney-sweepers and their Jack-o'-the-Green, whose tawdry finery, bedizened faces, unwonted gestures, and short-lived pleasures call forth good-humoured smiles and looks of sympathy in the spectators. There is no place where trap-ball, fives, prison-base, foot-ball, quoits, bowls are better understood or more successfully practised; and the very names of a cricket bat and ball make English fingers tingle. What happy days must 'Long Robinson' have passed in getting ready his wickets and mending his bats, who when two of the fingers of his right-hand were struck off by the violence of a ball, had a screw fastened to it to hold the bat, and with the other hand still sent the ball thundering against the boards that bounded *Old Lord's cricket-ground*! What delightful hours must have been his in looking forward to the matches that were to come, in recounting the feats he had performed in those that were past! I have myself whiled away whole mornings in seeing him strike the ball (like a countryman mowing with a scythe) to the farthest extremity of the smooth, level, sun-burnt ground, and with long, awkward strides count the notches that made victory sure!

Then again, cudgel-playing, quarter-staff, bull and badger-baiting, cock-fighting are almost the peculiar diversions of this island, and often objected to us as barbarous and cruel; horse-racing is the delight and the ruin of numbers; and the noble science of boxing is all our own. Foreigners can scarcely understand how we can squeeze pleasure out of this pastime; the luxury of hard blows given or received; the joy of the ring; nor the perseverance of the combatants.[1] The English also excel, or are not excelled in wiring a hare, in stalking a deer, in shooting, fishing, and hunting. England to this day boasts her Robin Hood and his merry men, that stout archer and outlaw, and patron-saint of the sporting-calendar. What a cheerful sound is that of the hunters, issuing from the autumnal wood and sweeping over hill and dale!

——'A cry more tuneable
Was never halloo'd to by hound or horn.'

What sparkling richness in the scarlet coats of the riders, what a glittering confusion in the pack, what spirit in the horses, what eagerness in the followers on foot, as they disperse over the plain, or force their way over hedge and ditch! Surely, the coloured prints and pictures of these, hung up in gentlemen's halls and village alehouses, however humble as works of art, have more life and health and spirit in them, and mark the pith and nerve of the national character more creditably than the mawkish, sentimental, affected designs of Theseus and Pirithous, and Æneas and Dido, pasted on foreign *salons à manger*, and the interior of country-houses. If our tastes are not epic, nor our pretensions lofty, they are simple and our own; and we may possibly enjoy our native rural sports, and the rude remembrances of them, with the truer relish on this account, that they are suited to us and we to them. The English nation, too, are naturally 'brothers of the angle.' This pursuit implies just that mixture of patience and pastime, of vacancy and thoughtfulness, of idleness and business, of pleasure and of pain, which is suited to the genius of an Englishman, and as I suspect, of no one else in the same degree. He is eminently gifted to stand in the situation assigned by Dr. Johnson to the angler, 'at one end of a rod with a worm at the other.' I should suppose no language can show such a book as an often-mentioned one, 'Walton's Complete Angler,'—so full of *naïveté*, of unaffected sprightliness, of busy trifling, of dainty songs, of refreshing brooks, of shady arbours, of happy thoughts and of the herb called *Heart's Ease*! Some persons can see neither the wit nor wisdom of this genuine volume, as if a book as well as a man might not have a personal character belonging to it, amiable, venerable from the spirit of joy and thorough goodness it manifests, independently of acute remarks or scientific discoveries: others object to the cruelty of Walton's theory and practice of trout-fishing—for my part, I should as soon charge an infant with cruelty for killing a fly, and I feel the same sort of pleasure in reading his book as I should have done in the company of this happy, child-like old man, watching his ruddy cheek, his laughing eye, the kindness of his heart, and the dexterity of his hand in seizing his finny prey! It must be confessed, there is often an odd sort of *materiality* in English sports and recreations. I have known several persons, whose existence consisted wholly in manual exercises, and all whose enjoyments lay at their finger-ends. Their greatest happiness was in cutting a stick, in mending a cabbage-net, in digging a hole in the ground, in hitting a mark, turning a lathe, or in something else of the same kind, at which they had a certain *knack*. Well is it when we can amuse ourselves with such trifles and without injury to others! This class of character, which the Spectator has immortalised in the person of Will Wimble, is still common among younger brothers and gentlemen of retired incomes in town or country. The *Cockney* character is of our English growth, as this intimates a feverish fidgety delight in rural sights and sounds, and a longing wish, after the turmoil and confinement of a city-life, to transport one's-self to the freedom and breathing sweetness of a country retreat. London is half suburbs. The suburbs of Paris are a desert; and you see nothing but crazy wind-mills, stone-walls, and a few straggling visitants in spots where in England you would find a thousand villas, a thousand terraces crowned with their own delights, or be stunned with the noise of bowling-greens and tea-gardens, or stifled with the fumes of tobacco mingling with fragrant shrubs, or the clouds of dust raised by half the population of the metropolis panting and toiling in search of a mouthful of fresh air. The Parisian is, perhaps, as well (or better) contented with himself wherever he is, stewed in his shop or his garret; the Londoner is miserable in these circumstances, and glad to escape from them.[1] Let no one object to the gloomy appearance of a London Sunday, compared with a Parisian one. It is a part of our politics and our religion: we would not have James the First's 'Book of Sports' thrust down our throats: and besides, it is a part of our character to do one thing at a time, and not to be dancing a jig and on our knees in the same breath. It is true the Englishman spends his Sunday evening at the ale-house—

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[1] 'The gentle and free passage of arms at Ashby' was, we are told, so called by the Chroniclers of the time, on account of the feats of horsemanship and the quantity of knightly blood that was shed. This last circumstance was perhaps necessary to qualify it with the epithet of 'gentle,' in the opinion of some of these historians. I think the reason why the English are the bravest nation on earth is, that the thought of blood or a delight in cruelty is not the chief excitement with them. Where it is, there is necessarily a *reaction*; for though it may add to our eagerness and savage ferocity in inflicting wounds, it does not enable us to endure them with greater patience. The English are led to the attack or sustain it equally well, because they fight as they box, not out of malice, but to show *pluck* and manhood. *Fair play and old England for ever*! This is the only bravery that will stand the test. There is the same determination and spirit shown in resistance as in attack; but not the same pleasure in getting a cut with a sabre as in giving one. There is, therefore, always a certain degree of effeminacy mixed up with any approach to cruelty, since both have their source in the same principle, *viz.* an over-valuing of pain. (*a*) This was the reason the French (having the best cause and the best general in the world) ran away at Waterloo, because they were inflamed, furious, drunk with the blood of their enemies, but when it came to their turn, wanting the same stimulus, they were panic-struck, and their hearts and their senses failed them all at once.

(*a*) Vanity is the same half-witted principle, compared with pride. It leaves men in the lurch when it is most needed; is mortified at being reduced to stand on the defensive, and relinquishes the field to its more surly antagonist.

——'And e'en on Sunday
Drank with Kirton Jean till Monday'—

but he only unbends and waxes mellow by degrees, and sits soaking till he can neither sit, stand, nor go: it is his vice, and a beastly one it is, but not a proof of any inherent distaste to mirth or good-fellowship. Neither can foreigners throw the carnival in our teeth with any effect: those who have seen it (at Florence, for example), will say that it is duller than any thing in England. Our Bartholomew-Fair is Queen Mab herself to it! What can be duller than a parcel of masks moving about the streets and looking as grave and monotonous as possible from day to day, and with the same lifeless formality in their limbs and gestures as in their features? One might as well expect variety and spirit in a procession of waxwork. We must be hard run indeed, when we have recourse to a pasteboard proxy to set off our mirth: a mask may be a very good cover for licentiousness (though of that I saw no signs), but it is a very bad exponent of wit and humour. I should suppose there is more drollery and unction in the caricatures in Gilray's shop-window, than in all the masks in Italy, without exception.[2]

The humour of English writing and description has often been wondered at; and it flows from the same source as the merry

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[1] The English are fond of change of scene; the French of change of posture; the Italians like to sit still and do nothing.

[2] Bells are peculiar to England. They jingle them in Italy during the carnival as boys do with us at Shrovetide; but they have no notion of ringing them. The sound of village bells never cheers you in travelling, nor have you the lute or cittern in their stead. The expression of 'Merry Bells' is a favourite and not one of the least appropriate in our language.

traits of our character. A degree of barbarism and rusticity seems necessary to the perfection of humour. The droll and laughable depend on peculiarity and incongruity of character. But with the progress of refinement, the peculiarities of individuals and of classes wear out or lose their sharp, abrupt edges; nay, a certain slowness and dulness of understanding is required to be struck with odd and unaccountable appearances, for which a greater facility of apprehension can sooner assign an explanation that breaks the force of the seeming absurdity, and to which a wider scope of imagination is more easily reconciled. Clowns and country people are more amused, are more disposed to laugh and make sport of the dress of strangers, because from their ignorance the surprise is greater, and they cannot conceive any thing to be natural or proper to which they are unused. Without a given portion of hardness and repulsiveness of feeling the ludicrous cannot well exist. Wonder, and curiosity, the attributes of inexperience, enter greatly into its composition. Now it appears to me that the English are (or were) just at that mean point between intelligence and obtuseness, which must produce the most abundant and happiest crop of humour. Absurdity and singularity glide over the French mind without jarring or jostling with it; or they evaporate in levity:—with the Italians they are lost in indolence or pleasure. The ludicrous takes hold of the English imagination, and clings to it with all its ramifications. We resent any difference or peculiarity of appearance at first, and yet, having not much malice at our hearts, we are glad to turn it into a jest—we are liable to be offended, and as willing to be pleased—struck with oddity from not knowing what to make of it, we wonder and burst out a laughing at the eccentricity of others, while we follow our own bent from wilfulness or simplicity, and thus afford them, in our turn, matter for the indulgence of the comic vein. It is possible that a greater refinement of manners may give birth to finer distinctions of satire and a nicer tact for the ridiculous: but our insular situation and character are, I should say, most likely to foster, as they have in fact fostered, the greatest quantity of natural and striking humour, in spite of our plodding tenaciousness, and want both of gaiety and quickness of perception. A set of raw recruits with their awkward movements and unbending joints are laughable enough: but they cease to be so, when they have once been drilled into discipline and uniformity So it is with nations that lose their angular points and grotesque qualities with education and intercourse: but it is in a mixed state of manners that comic humour chiefly flourishes, for, in order that the drollery may not be lost, we must have spectators of the passing scene who are able to appreciate and embody its most remarkable features,—wits as well as *butts* for ridicule. I shall mention two names in this department, which may serve to redeem the national character from absolute dulness and solemn pretence,—Fielding and Hogarth. These were thorough specimens of true English humour; yet both were grave men. In reality, too high a pitch of animal spirits runs away with the imagination, instead of helping it to reach the goal; is inclined to take the jest for granted when it ought to work it out with patient and marked touches, and it ends in vapid flippancy and impertinence. Among our neighbours on the Continent, Moliere and Rabelais carried the freedom of wit and humour to an almost incredible height; but they rather belonged to the old French school, and even approach and exceed the English licence and extravagance of conception. I do not consider Congreve's wit (though it belongs to us) as coming under the article here spoken of; for his genius is any thing but *merry*. Lord Byron was in the habit of railing at the spirit of our good old comedy, and of abusing Shakspeare's Clowns and Fools, which he said the refinement of the French and Italian stage would not endure, and which only our grossness and puerile taste could tolerate. In this I agree with him; and it is *pat* to my purpose. I flatter myself that we are almost the only people left who understand and relish *nonsense*. We are not 'merry and wise,' but indulge our mirth to excess and folly. When we trifle, we trifle in good earnest; and having once relaxed our hold of the helm, drift idly down the stream, and delighted with the change are tossed about 'by every little breath' of whim or caprice,

> 'That under Heaven is blown.'

All we then want is to proclaim a truce with reason, and to be pleased with as little expense of thought or pretension to wisdom as possible. This licensed fooling is carried to its very utmost length in Shakspeare, and in some other of our elder dramatists, without, perhaps, sufficient warrant or the same excuse. Nothing can justify this extreme relaxation but extreme tension. Shakspeare's trifling does indeed tread upon the very borders of vacancy: his meaning often hangs by the very slenderest threads. For this he might be blamed if it did not take away our breath to follow his eagle flights, or if he did not at other times make the cordage of our hearts crack. After our heads ache with thinking, it is fair to play the fool. The clowns were as proper an appendage to the gravity of our antique literature, as fools and dwarfs were to the stately dignity of courts and noble houses in former days. Of all people, they have the best right to claim a total exemption from rules and rigid formality, who, when they have any thing of importance to do, set about it with the greatest earnestness and perseverance, and are generally grave and sober to a proverb.[1] Poor Swift, who wrote more idle or *nonsense* verses than any man, was the severest of moralists; and his feelings and observations morbidly acute. Did not Lord Byron himself follow up his Childe Harold with his Don Juan?—not that I insist on what he did as an illustration of the English character. He was one of the English Nobility, not one of the English People; and his occasional ease and familiarity were in my mind equally constrained and affected, whether in relation to the pretensions of his rank or the efforts of his genius.

They ask you in France, how you pass your time in England without amusements; and can with difficulty believe that there are theatres in London, still less that they are larger and handsomer than those in Paris. That we should have comic actors, 'they own, surprises them.' They judge of the English character in the lump as one great jolter-head, containing all the stupidity of the country, as the large ball at the top of the Dispensary in Warwick-lane, from its resemblance to a gilded pill, has been made to represent the whole pharmacopœia and professional quackery of the kingdom. They have no more notion, for instance, how we should have such an actor as Liston on our stage, than if we were to tell them we have parts performed by a sea-otter; nor if they were to see him, would they be much the wiser, or know what to think of his unaccountable twitches of countenance or non-descript gestures, of his teeth chattering in his head, his eyes that seem dropping from their sockets, his nose that is tickled by a jest as by a feather and shining with self-complacency as if oiled, his ignorant conceit, his gaping stupor, his lumpish vivacity in Lubin Log or Tony Lumpkin; for as our rivals do not wind up the machine to such a determined intensity of purpose, neither have they any idea of its running down to such degrees of imbecility and folly, or coming to an absolute *stand-still* and lack of meaning, nor can they enter into or be amused with the contrast. No people ever laugh heartily who can give a reason for their doing so: and I believe the English in general are not yet in this predicament. They are not metaphysical, but very much in a state of nature; and this is one main ground why I give them credit for being merry, notwithstanding appearances. Their mirth is not the mirth of vice or desperation, but of innocence and a native wildness. They do not cavil or boggle at niceties, and not merely come to the edge of a joke, but break their necks over it with a wanton 'Here goes,' where others make a *pirouette* and stand upon decorum. The

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[1] The strict formality of French serious writing is resorted to as a foil to the natural levity of their character.

French cannot, however, be persuaded of the excellence of our comic stage, nor of the store we set by it. When they ask what amusements we have, it is plain they can never have heard of Mrs. Jordan, nor King, nor Bannister, nor Suett, nor Munden, nor Lewis, nor little Simmons, nor Dodd, and Parsons, and Emery, and Miss Pope, and Miss Farren, and all those who even in my time have gladdened a nation and 'made life's business like a summer's dream.' Can I think of them, and of their names that glittered in the play-bills when I was young, exciting all the flutter of hope and expectation of seeing them in their favourite parts of Nell, or Little Pickle, or Touchstone, or Sir Peter Teazle, or Lenitive in the Prize, or Lingo, or Crabtree, or Nipperkin, or old Dornton, or Ranger, or the Copper Captain, or Lord Sands, or Filch, or Moses, or Sir Andrew Aguecheek, or Acres, or Elbow, or Hodge, or Flora, or the Duenna, or Lady Teazle, or Lady Grace, or of the gaiety that sparkled in all eyes, and the delight that overflowed all hearts, as they glanced before us in these parts,

> 'Throwing a gaudy shadow upon life,'—

and not feel my heart yearn within me, or couple the thoughts of England and the spleen together? Our cloud has at least its rainbow tints; ours is not one long polar night of cold and dulness, but we have the gleaming lights of fancy to amuse us, the household fires of truth and genius to warm us. We can go to a play and see Liston; or stay at home and read Roderick Random; or have Hogarth's prints of *Marriage à la Mode* hanging round our room. 'Tut! there's livers even in England,' as well as 'out of it.' We are not quite the *forlorn hope* of humanity, the last of nations. The French look at us across the Channel, and seeing nothing but water and a cloudy mist, think that this is England.

> ——'What's our Britain
> In the world's volume? In a great pool a swan's nest.'

If they have any farther idea of us, it is of George III. and our Jack tars, the House of Lords and House of Commons, and this is no great addition to us. To go beyond this, to talk of arts and elegances as having taken up their abode here, or to say that Mrs. Abington was equal to Mademoiselle Mars, and that we at one time got up the 'School for Scandal,' as they do the 'Misanthrope,' is to persuade them that Iceland is a pleasant summer-retreat, or to recommend the whale-fishery as a classical amusement. The French are the *cockneys* of Europe, and have no idea how any one can exist out of Paris, or be alive without incessant grimace and *jabber*. Yet what imports it? What! though the joyous train I have just enumerated were, perhaps, never heard of in the precincts of the Palais-Royal, is it not enough that they gave pleasure where they were, to those who saw and heard them? Must our laugh, to be sincere, have its echo on the other side of the water? Had not the French their favourites and their enjoyments at the time, that we knew nothing of? Why then should we not have ours (and boast of them too) without their leave? A monopoly of self-conceit is not a monopoly of all other advantages. The English, when they go abroad, do not take away the prejudice against them by their looks. We seem duller and sadder than we are. As I write this, I am sitting in the open air in a beautiful valley, near Vevey: Clarens is on my left, the Dent de Jamant is behind me, the rocks of Meillerie opposite: under my feet is a green bank, enamelled with white and purple flowers, in which a dew-drop here and there still glitters with pearly light—

'And gaudy butterflies flutter around.'

Intent upon the scene and upon the thoughts that stir within me, I conjure up the cheerful passages of my life, and a crowd of happy images appear before me. No one would see it in my looks—my eyes grow dull and fixed, and I seem rooted to the spot, as all this phantasmagoria passes in review before me, glancing a reflex lustre on the face of the world and nature. But the traces of pleasure, in my case, sink into an absorbent ground of thoughtful melancholy, and require to be brought out by time and circumstances, or (as the critics tell you) by the *varnish* of style!

The *comfort*, on which the English lay so much stress, is of the same character, and arises from the same source as their mirth. Both exist by contrast and a sort of contradiction. The English are certainly the most uncomfortable of all people in themselves, and therefore it is that they stand in need of every kind of comfort and accommodation. The least thing puts them out of their way, and therefore every thing must be in its place. They are mightily offended at disagreeable tastes and smells, and therefore they exact the utmost neatness and nicety. They are sensible of heat and cold, and therefore they cannot exist, unless every thing is snug and warm, or else open and airy, where they are. They must have 'all appliances and means to boot.' They are afraid of interruption and intrusion, and therefore they shut themselves up in in-door enjoyments and by their own firesides. It is not that they require luxuries (for that implies a high degree of epicurean indulgence and gratification), but they cannot do without *their comforts*; that is, whatever tends to supply their physical wants, and ward off physical pain and annoyance.

As they have not a fund of animal spirits and enjoyments in themselves, they cling to external objects for support, and derive solid satisfaction from the ideas of order, cleanliness, plenty, property, and domestic quiet, as they seek for diversion from odd accidents and grotesque surprises, and have the highest possible relish not of voluptuous softness, but of hard knocks and dry blows, as one means of ascertaining their personal identity.

OF PERSONS ONE WOULD WISH TO HAVE SEEN

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*January*, 1826.

'Come like shadows—so depart.'

B—— it was, I think, who suggested this subject, as well as the defence of Guy Faux, which I urged him to execute. As, however, he would undertake neither, I suppose I must do both—a task for which he would have been much fitter, no less from the temerity than the felicity of his pen—

> 'Never so sure our rapture to create
> As when it touch'd the brink of all we hate.'

Compared with him I shall, I fear, make but a common-place piece of business of it; but I should be loth the idea was entirely lost, and besides I may avail myself of some hints of his in the progress of it. I am sometimes, I suspect, a better reporter of the ideas of other people than expounder of my own. I pursue the one too far into paradox or mysticism; the others I am not bound to follow farther than I like, or than seems fair and reasonable.

On the question being started, A—— said, 'I suppose the two first persons you would choose to see would be the two greatest names in English literature, Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Locke?' In this A——, as usual, reckoned without his host. Every one burst out a laughing at the expression of B——'s face, in which impatience was restrained by courtesy. 'Yes, the greatest names,' he stammered out hastily, 'but they were not persons—not persons.'—'Not persons?' said A——, looking wise and foolish at the same time, afraid his triumph might be premature. 'That is,' rejoined B——, 'not characters, you know. By Mr. Locke and Sir Isaac Newton, you mean the Essay on the Human Understanding, and the *Principia*, which we have to this day. Beyond their contents there is nothing personally interesting in the men. But what we want to see any one *bodily* for, is when there is something peculiar, striking in the individuals, more than we can learn from their writings, and yet are curious to know. I dare say Locke and Newton were very like Kneller's portraits of them. But who could paint Shakspeare?'—'Ay,' retorted A——, 'there it is; then I suppose you would prefer seeing him and Milton instead?'—'No,' said B——, 'neither. I have seen so much of Shakspeare on the stage and on book-stalls, in frontispieces and on mantle-pieces, that I am quite tired of the everlasting repetition: and as to Milton's face, the impressions that have come down to us of it I do not like; it is too starched and puritanical; and I should be afraid of losing some of the manna of his poetry in the leaven of his countenance and the precisian's band and gown.'—'I shall guess no more,' said A——. 'Who is it, then, you would like to see "in his habit as he lived," if you had your choice of the whole range of English literature?' B—— then named Sir Thomas Brown and Fulke Greville, the friend of Sir Philip Sidney, as the two worthies whom he should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter on the floor of his apartment in their night-gown and slippers, and to exchange friendly greeting with them. At this A—— laughed outright, and conceived B—— was jesting with him; but as no one followed his example, he thought there might be something in it, and waited for an explanation in a state of whimsical suspense. B—— then (as well as I can remember a conversation that passed twenty years ago—how time slips!) went on as follows. 'The reason why I pitch upon these two authors is, that their writings are riddles, and they themselves the most mysterious of personages. They resemble the soothsayers of old, who dealt in dark hints and doubtful oracles; and I should like to ask them the meaning of what no mortal but themselves, I should suppose, can fathom. There is Dr. Johnson, I have no curiosity, no strange uncertainty about him: he and Boswell together have pretty well let me into the secret of what passed through his mind. He and other writers like him are sufficiently explicit: my friends, whose repose I should be tempted to disturb, (were it in my power) are implicit, inextricable, inscrutable.

"And call up him who left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold."

'When I look at that obscure but gorgeous prose-composition (the *Urn-burial*) I seem to myself to look into a deep abyss, at the bottom of which are hid pearls and rich treasure; or it is like a stately labyrinth of doubt and withering speculation, and I would invoke the spirit of the author to lead me through it. Besides, who would not be curious to see the lineaments of a man who, having himself been twice married, wished that mankind were propagated like trees! As to Fulke Greville, he is like nothing but one of his own "Prologues spoken by the ghost of an old king of Ormus," a truly formidable and inviting personage: his style is apocalyptical, cabalistical, a knot worthy of such an apparition to untie; and for the unravelling a passage or two, I would stand the brunt of an encounter with so portentous a commentator!'—'I am afraid in that case,' said A——, 'that if the mystery were once cleared up, the merit might be lost;' —and turning to me, whispered a friendly apprehension, that while B—— continued to admire these old crabbed authors, he would never become a popular writer. Dr. Donne was mentioned as a writer of the same period, with a very interesting countenance, whose history was singular, and whose meaning was often quite as *uncomeatable*, without a personal citation from the dead, as that of any of his contemporaries. The volume was produced; and while some one was expatiating on the exquisite simplicity and beauty of the portrait prefixed to the old edition, A—— got hold of the poetry, and exclaiming 'What have we here?' read the following:—

'Here lies a She-Sun and a He-Moon there,
She gives the best light to his sphere,
Or each is both and all, and so
They unto one another nothing owe.'

There was no resisting this, till B——, seizing the volume, turned to the beautiful 'Lines to his Mistress,' dissuading her from accompanying him abroad, and read them with suffused features and a faltering tongue.

'By our first strange and fatal interview,
By all desires which thereof did ensue,
By our long starving hopes, by that remorse
Which my words' masculine persuasive force
Begot in thee, and by the memory
Of hurts, which spies and rivals threaten'd me,
I calmly beg. But by thy father's wrath,
By all pains which want and divorcement hath,
I conjure thee; and all the oaths which I
And thou have sworn to seal joint constancy
Here I unswear, and overswear them thus,
Thou shalt not love by ways so dangerous.
Temper, oh fair Love! love's impetuous rage,
Be my true mistress still, not my feign'd Page;
I'll go, and, by thy kind leave, leave behind
Thee, only worthy to nurse in my mind.

Thirst to come back; oh, if thou die before,
My soul from other lands to thee shall soar.
Thy (else Almighty) beauty cannot move
Rage from the seas, nor thy love teach them love,
Nor tame wild Boreas' harshness; thou hast read
How roughly he in pieces shiver'd
Fair Orithea, whom he swore he lov'd.
Fall ill or good, 'tis madness to have prov'd
Dangers unurg'd: Feed on this flattery,
That absent lovers one with th' other be.
Dissemble nothing, not a boy; nor change
Thy body's habit, nor mind; be not strange
To thyself only. All will spy in thy face
A blushing, womanly, discovering grace.
Richly cloth'd apes are called apes, and as soon
Eclips'd as bright we call the moon the moon.
Men of France, changeable cameleons,
Spittles of diseases, shops of fashions,
Love's fuellers, and the rightest company
Of players, which upon the world's stage be,
Will quickly know thee. . . O stay here! for thee
England is only a worthy gallery,
To walk in expectation; till from thence
Our greatest King call thee to his presence.
When I am gone, dream me some happiness,
Nor let thy looks our long hid love confess,
Nor praise, nor dispraise me; nor bless, nor curse
Openly love's force, nor in bed fright thy nurse
With midnight startings, crying out, Oh, oh,
Nurse, oh, my love is slain, I saw him go
O'er the white Alps alone; I saw him, I,
Assail'd, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall, and die.
Augur me better chance, except dread Jove
Think it enough for me to have had thy love.'

Some one then inquired of B—— if we could not see from the window the Temple-walk in which Chaucer used to take his exercise; and on his name being put to the vote, I was pleased to find that there was a general sensation in his favour in all but A——, who said something about the ruggedness of the metre, and even objected to the quaintness of the orthography. I was vexed at this superficial gloss, pertinaciously reducing every thing to its own trite level, and asked 'if he did not think it would be worth while to scan the eye that had first greeted the Muse in that dim twilight and early dawn of English literature; to see the head, round which the visions of fancy must have played like gleams of inspiration or a sudden glory; to watch those lips that "lisped in numbers, for the numbers came"

—as by a miracle, or as if the dumb should speak? Nor was it alone that he had been the first to tune his native tongue (however imperfectly to modern ears); but he was himself a noble, manly character, standing before his age and striving to advance it; a pleasant humourist withal, who has not only handed down to us the living manners of his time, but had, no doubt, store of curious and quaint devices, and would make as hearty a companion as Mine Host of Tabard. His interview with Petrarch is fraught with interest. Yet I would rather have seen Chaucer in company with the author of the Decameron, and have heard them exchange their best stories together, the Squire's Tale against the Story of the Falcon, the Wife of Bath's Prologue against the Adventures of Friar Albert. How fine to see the high mysterious brow which learning then wore, relieved by the gay, familiar tone of men of the world, and by the courtesies of genius. Surely, the thoughts and feelings which passed through the minds of these great revivers of learning, these Cadmuses who sowed the teeth of letters, must have stamped an expression on their features, as different from the moderns as their books, and well worth the perusal. Dante,' I continued, 'is as interesting a person as his own Ugolino, one whose lineaments curiosity would as eagerly devour in order to penetrate his spirit, and the only one of the Italian poets I should care much to see. There is a fine portrait of Ariosto by no less a hand than Titian's; light, Moorish, spirited, but not answering our idea. The same artist's large colossal profile of Peter Aretine is the only likeness of the kind that has the effect of conversing with "the mighty dead," and this is truly spectral, ghastly, necromantic.' B—— put it to me if I should like to see Spenser as well as Chaucer; and I answered without hesitation, 'No; for that his beauties were ideal, visionary, not palpable or personal, and therefore connected with less curiosity about the man. His poetry was the essence of romance, a very halo round the bright orb of fancy; and the bringing in the individual might dissolve the charm. No tones of voice could come up to the mellifluous cadence of his verse; no form but of a winged angel could vie with the airy shapes he has described. He was (to our apprehensions) rather "a creature of the element, that lived in the rainbow and played in the plighted clouds," than an ordinary mortal. Or if he did appear, I should wish it to be as a mere vision, like one of his own pageants, and that he should pass by unquestioned like a dream or sound—

——"*That* was Arion crown'd:
So went he playing on the wat'ry plain!"

Captain C. muttered something about Columbus, and M. C. hinted at the Wandering Jew; but the last was set aside as spurious, and the first made over to the New World.

'I should like,' said Miss D——, 'to have seen Pope talking with Patty Blount; and I *have* seen Goldsmith.' Every one turned round to look at Miss D——, as if by so doing they too could get a sight of Goldsmith.

'Where,' asked a harsh croaking voice, 'was Dr. Johnson in the years 1745-6? He did not write any thing that we know of, nor is there any account of him in Boswell during those two years. Was he in Scotland with the Pretender? He seems to have passed through the scenes in the Highlands in company with Boswell many years after "with lack-lustre eye," yet as if they were familiar to him, or associated in his mind with interests that he durst not explain. If so, it would be an additional reason for my liking him; and I would give something to have seen him seated in the tent with the youthful Majesty of Britain, and penning the Proclamation to all true subjects and adherents of the legitimate Government.'

'I thought,' said A——, turning short round upon B——, 'that you of the Lake School did not like Pope?'—'Not like Pope! My dear sir, you must be under a mistake—I can read him over and over for ever!'—'Why certainly, the "Essay on Man" must be master-piece.'—'It may be so, but I seldom look into it.'—'Oh! then it's his Satires you admire?'—'No, not his Satires, but his friendly Epistles and his compliments.'—'Compliments! I did not know he ever made any.'—'The finest,' said B——, 'that were ever paid by the wit of man. Each of them is worth an estate for life—nay, is an immortality. There is that superb one to Lord Cornbury:

"Despise low joys, low gains;
Disdain whatever Cornbury disdains;
Be virtuous, and be happy for your pains."

'Was there ever more artful insinuation of idolatrous praise? And then that noble apotheosis of his friend Lord Mansfield (however little deserved), when, speaking of the House of Lords, he adds—

"Conspicuous scene! another yet is nigh,
(More silent far) where kings and poets lie;
Where Murray (long enough his country's pride)
Shall be no more than Tully or than Hyde!"

'And with what a fine turn of indignant flattery he addresses Lord Bolingbroke—

"Why rail they then, if but one wreath of mine,
Oh! all accomplish'd St. John, deck thy shrine?"

‘Or turn,’ continued B——, with a slight hectic on his cheek and his eye glistening, ‘to his list of early friends:

> “But why then publish? Granville the polite,
> And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;
> Well-natured Garth inflamed with early praise,
> And Congreve loved and Swift endured my lays:
> The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,
> Ev'n mitred Rochester would nod the head;
> And St. John's self (great Dryden's friend before)
> Received with open arms one poet more.
> Happy my studies, if by these approved!
> Happier their author, if by these beloved!
> From these the world will judge of men and books,
> Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks.”’

Here his voice totally failed him, and throwing down the book, he said, ‘Do you think I would not wish to have been friends with such a man as this?’

‘What say you to Dryden?’—‘He rather made a show of himself, and courted popularity in that lowest temple of Fame, a coffee-house, so as in some measure to vulgarize one's idea of him. Pope, on the contrary, reached the very *beau ideal* of what a poet's life should be; and his fame while living seemed to be an emanation from that which was to circle his name after death. He was so far enviable (and one would feel proud to have witnessed the rare spectacle in him) that he was almost the only poet and man of genius who met with his reward on this side of the tomb, who realized in friends, fortune, the esteem of the world, the most sanguine hopes of a youthful ambition, and who found that sort of patronage from the great during his lifetime which they would be thought anxious to bestow upon him after his death. Read Gay's verses to him on his supposed return from Greece, after his translation of Homer was finished, and say if you would not gladly join the bright procession that welcomed him home, or see it once more land at Whitehall-stairs.’—‘Still,’ said Miss D——, ‘I would rather have seen him talking with Patty Blount, or riding by in a coronet-coach with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu!’

E——, who was deep in a game of piquet at the other end of the room, whispered to M. C. to ask if Junius would not be a fit person to invoke from the dead. ‘Yes,’ said B——, ‘provided he would agree to lay aside his mask.’

We were now at a stand for a short time, when Fielding was mentioned as a candidate: only one, however, seconded the proposition. ‘Richardson?’—‘By all means, but only to look at him through the glass-door of his back-shop, hard at work upon one of his novels (the most extraordinary contrast that ever was presented between an author and his works), but not to let him come behind his counter lest he should want you to turn customer, nor to go upstairs with him, lest he should offer to read the first manuscript of Sir Charles Grandison, which was originally written in eight and twenty volumes octavo, or get out the letters of his female correspondents, to prove that Joseph Andrews was low.'

There was but one statesman in the whole of English history that any one expressed the least desire to see—Oliver Cromwell, with his fine, frank, rough, pimply face, and wily policy;—and one enthusiast, John Bunyan, the immortal author of the Pilgrim's Progress. It seemed that if he came into the room, dreams would follow him, and that each person would nod under his golden cloud, 'nigh-sphered in Heaven,' a canopy as strange and stately as any in Homer.

Of all persons near our own time, Garrick's name was received with the greatest enthusiasm, who was proposed by J. F——. He presently superseded both Hogarth and Handel, who had been talked of, but then it was on condition that he should act in tragedy and comedy, in the play and the farce, Lear and Wildair and Abel Drugger. What a *sight for sore eyes* that would be! Who would not part with a year's income at least, almost with a year of his natural life, to be present at it? Besides, as he could not act alone, and recitations are unsatisfactory things, what a troop he must bring with him—the silver-tongued Barry, and Quin, and Shuter and Weston, and Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Pritchard, of whom I have heard my father speak as so great a favourite when he was young! This would indeed be a revival of the dead, the restoring of art; and so much the more desirable, as such is the lurking scepticism mingled with our overstrained admiration of past excellence, that though we have the speeches of Burke, the portraits of Reynolds, the writings of Goldsmith, and the conversation of Johnson, to show what people could do at that period, and to confirm the universal testimony to the merits of Garrick; yet, as it was before our time, we have our misgivings, as if he was probably after all little better than a Bartlemy-fair actor, dressed out to play Macbeth in a scarlet coat and laced cocked-hat. For one, I should like to have seen and heard with my own eyes and ears. Certainly, by all accounts, if any one was ever moved by the true histrionic *æstus*, it was Garrick. When he followed the Ghost in Hamlet, he did not drop the sword, as most actors do behind the scenes, but kept the point raised the whole way round, so fully was he possessed with the idea, or so anxious not to lose sight of his part for a moment. Once at a splendid dinner-party at Lord ——'s, they suddenly missed Garrick, and could not imagine what was become of him, till they were drawn to the window by the convulsive screams and peals of laughter of a young negro boy, who was rolling on the ground in an ecstacy of delight to see Garrick mimicing a turkey-cock in the court-yard, with his coat-tail stuck out behind, and in a seeming flutter of feathered rage and pride. Of our party only two persons present had seen the British Roscius; and they seemed as willing as the rest to renew their acquaintance with their old favourite.

We were interrupted in the hey-day and mid-career of this fanciful speculation, by a grumbler in a corner, who declared it was a shame to make all this rout about a mere player and farce-writer, to the neglect and exclusion of the fine old dramatists, the contemporaries and rivals of Shakspeare. B—— said he had anticipated this objection when he had named the author of Mustapha and Alaham; and out of caprice insisted upon keeping him to represent the set, in preference to the wild hair-brained enthusiast Kit Marlowe; to the sexton of St. Ann's, Webster, with his melancholy yew-trees and death's-heads; to Deckar, who was but a garrulous proser; to the voluminous Heywood; and even to Beaumont and Fletcher, whom we might offend by complimenting the wrong author on their joint productions. Lord Brook, on the contrary, stood quite by himself, or in Cowley's words, was 'a vast species alone.' Some one hinted at the circumstance of his being a lord, which rather startled B——, but he said a *ghost* would perhaps dispense with strict etiquette, on being regularly addressed by his title. Ben Jonson divided our suffrages pretty equally. Some were afraid he would begin to traduce Shakspeare, who was not present to defend himself. 'If he grows disagreeable,' it was whispered aloud, 'there is G——can match him.' At length, his romantic visit to Drummond of Hawthornden was mentioned, and turned the scale in his favour.

B—— inquired if there was any one that was hanged that I would choose to mention? And I answered, Eugene Aram.[1] The name of the 'Admirable Crichton' was suddenly started as a splendid example of *waste* talents, so different from the generality of his countrymen. This choice was mightily approved by a North-Briton present, who declared himself descended from that prodigy of learning and accomplishment, and said he had family-plate in his possession as vouchers for the fact, with the initials A. C.—*Admirable Crichton!* H—— laughed or rather roared as heartily at this as I should think he has done for many years.

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[1] See Newgate Calendar for 1758.

The last-named Mitre-courtier [1] then wished to know whether there were any metaphysicians to whom one might be tempted to apply the wizard spell? I replied, there were only six in modern times deserving the name—Hobbes, Berkeley, Butler, Hartley, Hume, Leibnitz; and perhaps Jonathan Edwards, a Massachusets man.[2] As to the French, who talked fluently of having *created* this science, there was not a title in any of their writings, that was not to be found literally in the authors I had mentioned. [Horne Tooke, who might have a claim to come in under the head of Grammar, was still living.] None of these names seemed to excite much interest, and I did not plead for the re-appearance of those who might be thought best fitted by the abstracted nature of their studies for their present spiritual and disembodied state, and who, even while on this living stage, were nearly divested of common flesh and blood. As A—— with an uneasy fidgetty face was about to put some question about Mr. Locke and Dugald Stewart, he was prevented by M. C. who observed, 'If J—— was here, he would undoubtedly be for having up those profound and redoubted scholiasts, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus.' I said this might be fair enough in him who had read or fancied he had read the original works, but I did not see how we could have any right to call up these authors to give an account of themselves in person, till we had looked into their writings.

By this time it should seem that some rumour of our whimsical deliberation had got wind, and had disturbed the *irritabile genus* in their shadowy abodes, for we received messages from several candidates that we had just been thinking of. Gray declined our invitation, though he had not yet been asked: Gay offered to come and bring in his hand the Duchess of Bolton, the original Polly: Steele and Addison left their cards as Captain Sentry and Sir Roger de Coverley: Swift came in and sat down without speaking a word, and quitted the room as abruptly: Otway and Chatterton were seen lingering on the opposite side of the Styx, but could not muster enough between them to pay Charon his fare: Thomson fell asleep in the boat, and was rowed back again—and Burns sent a low fellow, one John Barleycorn, an old companion of his who had conducted him to the other world, to say that he had during his lifetime been drawn out of his retirement as a show, only to be made an exciseman of, and that he would rather remain where he was. He desired, however, to shake hands by his representative—the hand, thus held out, was in a burning fever, and shook prodigiously.

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[1] B—— at this time occupied chambers in Mitre court, Fleet Street.

[2] Lord Bacon is not included in this list, nor do I know where he should come in. It is not easy to make room for him and his reputation together. This great and celebrated man in some of his works recommends it to pour a bottle of claret into the ground of a morning, and to stand over it, inhaling the perfumes. So he sometimes enriched the dry and barren soil of speculation with the fine aromatic spirit of his genius. His 'Essays' and his 'Advancement of Learning' are works of vast depth and scope of observation. The last, though it contains no positive discoveries, is a noble chart of the human intellect, and a guide to all future inquirers.

The room was hung round with several portraits of eminent painters. While we were debating whether we should demand speech with these masters of mute eloquence, whose features were so familiar to us, it seemed that all at once they glided from their frames, and seated themselves at some little distance from us. There was Leonardo with his majestic beard and watchful eye, having a bust of Archimedes before him; next him was Raphael's graceful head turned round to the Fornarina; and on his other side was Lucretia Borgia, with calm, golden locks; Michael Angelo had placed the model of St. Peter's on the table before him; Corregio had an angel at his side; Titian was seated with his Mistress between himself and Giorgioni; Guido was accompanied by his own Aurora, who took a dice-box from him; Claude held a mirror in his hand; Rubens patted a beautiful panther (led in by a satyr) on the head; Vandyke appeared as his own Paris, and Rembrandt was hid under furs, gold chains and jewels, which Sir Joshua eyed closely, holding his hand so as to shade his forehead. Not a word was spoken; and as we rose to do them homage, they still presented the same surface to the view. Not being *bonâ-fide* representations of living people, we got rid of the splendid apparitions by signs and dumb show. As soon as they had melted into thin air, there was a loud noise at the outer door, and we found it was Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio, who had been raised from the dead by their earnest desire to see their illustrious successors—

> 'Whose names on earth
> In Fame's eternal records live for aye!'

Finding them gone, they had no ambition to be seen after them, and mournfully withdrew. 'Egad!' said B——, 'those are the very fellows I should like to have had some talk with, to know how they could see to paint when all was dark around them?'

'But shall we have nothing to say,' interrogated G. J——, 'to the Legend of Good Women?'—'Name, name, Mr. J——,' cried H—— in a boisterous tone of friendly exultation, 'name as many as you please, without reserve or fear of molestation!' J—— was perplexed between so many amiable recollections, that the name of the lady of his choice expired in a pensive whiff of his pipe; and B—— impatiently declared for the Duchess of Newcastle. Mrs. Hutchinson was no sooner mentioned, than she carried the day from the Duchess. We were the less solicitous on this subject of filling up the posthumous lists of Good Women, as there was already one in the room as good, as sensible, and in all respects as exemplary, as the best of them could be for their lives! 'I should like vastly to have seen Ninon de l'Enclos,' said that incomparable person; and this immediately put us in mind that we had neglected to pay honour due to our friends on the other side of the Channel: Voltaire, the patriarch of levity, and Rousseau, the father of sentiment, Montaigne and Rabelais (great in wisdom and in wit), Molière and that illustrious group that are collected round him (in the print of that subject) to hear him read his comedy of the Tartuffe at the house of Ninon; Racine, La Fontaine, Rochefoucault, St. Evremont, &c.

'There is one person,' said a shrill, querulous voice, 'I would rather see than all these—Don Quixote!'

'Come, come!' said H——; 'I thought we should have no heroes, real or fabulous. What say you, Mr. B——? Are you for eking out your shadowy list with such names as Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Tamerlane, or Ghengis Khan?'—'Excuse me,' said B——, 'on the subject of characters in active life, plotters and disturbers of the world, I have a crotchet of my own, which I beg leave to reserve.'—'No, no! come, out with your worthies!'—'What do you think of Guy Faux and Judas Iscariot?' H—— turned an eye upon him like a wild Indian, but cordial and full of smothered glee. 'Your most exquisite reason!' was echoed on all sides; and A—— thought that B—— had now fairly entangled himself. 'Why, I cannot but think,' retorted he of the wistful countenance, 'that Guy Faux, that poor fluttering annual scare-crow of straw and rags, is an ill-used gentleman. I would give something to see him sitting pale and emaciated, surrounded by his matches and his barrels of gunpowder, and expecting the moment that was to transport him to Paradise for his heroic self-devotion; but if I say any more, there is that fellow G—— will make something of it. And as to Judas Iscariot, my reason is different. I would fain see the face of him, who, having dipped his hand in the same dish with the Son of Man, could afterwards betray him. I have no conception of such a thing; nor have I ever seen any picture (not even Leonardo's very fine one) that gave me the least idea of it.'—'You have said enough, Mr. B——, to justify your choice.'

'Oh! ever right, Menenius,—ever right!'

'There is only one other person I can ever think of after this,' continued H——; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance of mortality. 'If Shakspeare was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment!'

As a lady present seemed now to get uneasy at the turn the conversation had taken, we rose up to go. The morning broke with that dim, dubious light by which Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio must have seen to paint their earliest works; and we parted to meet again and renew similar topics at night, the next night, and the night after that, till that night overspread Europe which saw no dawn. The same event, in truth, broke up our little Congress that broke up the great one. But that was to meet again: our deliberations have never been resumed.

ON A SUN-DIAL

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*October*, 1827.

'To carve out dials quaintly, point by point.'
SHAKESPEARE.

Horas non numero nisi serenas—is the motto of a sun-dial near Venice. There is a softness and a harmony in the words and in the thought unparalleled. Of all conceits it is surely the most classical. 'I count only the hours that are serene.' What a bland and care-dispelling feeling! How the shadows seem to fade on the dial-plate as the sky lours, and time presents only a blank unless as its progress is marked by what is joyous, and all that is not happy sinks into oblivion! What a fine lesson is conveyed to the mind—to take no note of time but by its benefits, to watch only for the smiles and neglect the frowns of fate, to compose our lives of bright and gentle moments, turning always to the sunny side of things, and letting the rest slip from our imaginations, unheeded or forgotten! How different from the common art of self-tormenting! For myself, as I rode along the Brenta, while the sun shone hot upon its sluggish, slimy waves, my sensations were far from comfortable; but the reading this inscription on the side of a glaring wall in an instant restored me to myself; and still, whenever I think of or repeat it, it has the power of wafting me into the region of pure and blissful abstraction. I

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[1] There are few things more contemptible than the conversation of mere *men of the town*. It is made up of the technicalities and cant of all professions, without the spirit or knowledge of any. It is flashy and vapid, or is like the rinsings of different liquors at a night-cellar instead of a bottle of fine old port. It is without body or clearness, and a heap of affectation. In fact, I am very much of the opinion of that old Scotch gentleman who owned that 'he preferred the dullest book he had ever read to the most brilliant conversation it had ever fallen to his lot to hear!'

cannot help fancying it to be a legend of Popish superstition. Some monk of the dark ages must have invented and bequeathed it to us, who, loitering in trim gardens and watching the silent march of time, as his fruits ripened in the sun or his flowers scented the balmy air, felt a mild languor pervade his senses, and having little to do or to care for, determined (in imitation of his sun-dial) to efface that little from his thoughts or draw a veil over it, making of his life one long dream of quiet! *Horas non numero nisi serenas*—he might repeat, when the heavens were overcast and the gathering storm scattered the falling leaves, and turn to his books and wrap himself in his golden studies! Out of some such mood of mind, indolent, elegant, thoughtful, this exquisite device (speaking volumes) must have originated.

Of the several modes of counting time, that by the sun-dial is perhaps the most apposite and striking, if not the most convenient or comprehensive. It does not obtrude its observations, though it 'morals on the time,' and, by its stationary character, forms a contrast to the most fleeting of all essences. It stands *sub dio*—under the marble air, and there is some connexion between the image of infinity and eternity. I should also like to have a sunflower growing near it with bees fluttering round.[1] It should be of iron to denote duration, and have a dull, leaden look. I hate a sun-dial made of wood, which is rather calculated to show the variations of the seasons, than the progress of time, slow, silent, imperceptible, chequered with light and shade. If our hours were all serene, we might probably take almost as little note of them, as the dial does of those that are clouded. It is the shadow thrown across, that gives us warning of their flight. Otherwise, our impressions would take the same undistinguishable hue; we should scarce be conscious of our existence. Those who have had none of the cares of this life to harass and disturb them, have been obliged to have recourse to the hopes and fears of the next to enliven the prospect before them. Most of the methods for measuring the lapse of time have, I believe, been the contrivance of monks and religious recluses, who, finding time hang heavy on their hands, were at some pains to see how they got rid of it. The hour-glass is, I suspect, an older invention; and it is certainly the most defective of all. Its creeping sands are not indeed an unapt emblem of the minute, countless portions of our existence; and the manner in which they gradually slide through the hollow glass and diminish in number till not a single one is left, also illustrates the way in which our years slip from us by stealth. but as a mechanical invention, it is rather a hindrance than a help, for it requires to have the time, of which it pretends to count the precious moments, taken up in attention to itself, and in seeing that when one end of the glass is empty, we turn it round, in order that it may go on again, or else all our labour is lost, and we must wait for some other mode of ascertaining the time before we can recover our reckoning and proceed as before. The philosopher in his cell, the cottager at her spinning-wheel must, however, find an invaluable acquisition in this 'companion of the lonely hour,' as it has been called,[1] which not only serves to tell how the time goes, but to fill up its vacancies. What a treasure must not the little box seem to hold, as if it were a sacred deposit of the very grains and fleeting sands of life! What a business, in lieu of other more important avocations, to see it out to the last sand, and then to renew the process again on the instant, that there may not be the least flaw or error in the account! What a strong sense must be brought home to the mind of the value and irrecoverable nature of the time that is fled; what a thrilling, incessant consciousness of the slippery tenure by which we hold what remains of it! Our very existence must seem crumbling to atoms, and running down (without a miraculous reprieve) to the last fragment. 'Dust to dust and ashes to ashes' is a text that might be fairly inscribed on an hour-glass: it is ordinarily associated with the scythe of Time and a Death's-head, as a *Memento mori*; and has, no doubt, furnished many a tacit hint to the apprehensive and visionary enthusiast in favour of a resurrection to another life!

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[1] Is this a verbal fallacy? Or in the close, retired, sheltered scene which I have imagined to myself, is not the sun-flower a natural accompaniment of the sun-dial?

The French give a different turn to things, less *sombre* and less edifying. A common and also a very pleasing ornament to a clock, in Paris, is a figure of Time seated in a boat which Cupid is rowing along, with the motto, *L'Amour fait passer le Tems*—which the wits again have travestied into *Le Tems fait passer L'Amour.* All this is ingenious and well; but it wants sentiment. I like a people who have something that they love and something that they hate, and with whom every thing is not alike a matter of indifference or *pour passer le tems.* The French attach no importance to any thing, except for the moment; they are only thinking how they shall get rid of one sensation for another; all their ideas are *in transitu.* Every thing is detached, nothing is accumulated. It would be a million of years before a Frenchman would think of the *Horas non numero nisi serenas.* Its impassioned repose and *ideal* voluptuousness are as far from their breasts as the poetry of that line in Shakspeare—'How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon that bank!' They never arrive at the classical—or the romantic. They blow the bubbles of vanity, fashion, and pleasure; but they do not expand their perceptions into refinement, or strengthen them into solidity. Where there is nothing fine in the ground-work of the imagination, nothing fine in the superstructure can be produced. They are light, airy, fanciful (to give them their due)—but when they attempt to be serious (beyond mere good sense) they are either dull or extravagant. When the volatile salt has flown off, nothing but a *caput mortuum* remains. They have infinite crotchets and caprices with their clocks and watches, which seem made for any thing but to tell the hour—gold-repeaters, watches with metal covers, clocks with hands to count the seconds. There is no escaping from quackery and impertinence, even in our attempts to calculate the waste of time. The years gallop fast enough for me, without remarking every moment as it flies; and farther, I must say I dislike a watch (whether of French or English manufacture) that comes to me like a footpad with its face muffled, and does not present its clear, open aspect like a friend, and point with its finger to the time of day. All this opening and shutting of dull, heavy cases (under pretence that the glass-lid is liable to be broken, or lets in the dust or air and obstructs the movement of the watch), is not to husband time, but to give trouble. It is mere pomposity and self-importance, like consulting a mysterious oracle that one carries about with one in one's pocket, instead of asking a common question of an acquaintance or companion. There are two clocks which strike the hour in the room where I am. This I do not like. In the first place, I do not want to be reminded twice how the time goes (it is like the second tap of a saucy servant at your door when perhaps you have no wish to get up): in the next place, it is starting a difference of opinion on the subject, and I am averse to every appearance of wrangling and disputation. Time moves on the same, whatever disparity there may be in our mode of keeping count of it, like true fame in spite of the cavils and contradictions of the critics. I am no friend to repeating watches. The only pleasant association I have with them is the account given by Rousseau of some French lady, who sat up reading the *New Heloise* when it first came out, and ordering her maid to sound the repeater, found it was too late to go to bed, and continued reading on till morning. Yet how different is the interest excited by this story from the account which Rousseau somewhere else gives of his sitting up with his father reading romances, when a boy, till they were startled by the swallows twittering in their nests at day-break, and the father cried out, half angry and ashamed

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[1] 'Once more, companion of the lonely hour,
I'll turn thee up again.'
Bloomfield's Poems—The Widow to her Hour-glass.

—'*Allons, mon fils ; je suis plus enfant que toi!*' In general, I have heard repeating watches sounded in stage-coaches at night, when some fellow-traveller suddenly awaking and wondering what was the hour, another has very deliberately taken out his watch, and pressing the spring, it has counted out the time; each petty stroke acting like a sharp puncture on the ear, and informing me of the dreary hours I had already passed, and of the more dreary ones I had to wait till morning.

The great advantage, it is true, which clocks have over watches and other dumb reckoners of time is, that for the most part they strike the hour—that they are as it were the mouth-pieces of time; that they not only point it to the eye, but impress it on the ear; that they 'lend it both an understanding and a tongue.' Time thus speaks to us in an audible and warning voice. Objects of sight are easily distinguished by the sense, and suggest useful reflections to the mind; sounds, from their intermittent nature, and perhaps other causes, appeal more to the imagination, and strike upon the heart. But to do this, they must be unexpected and involuntary—there must be no trick in the case—they should not be squeezed out with a finger and a thumb; there should be nothing optional, personal in their occurrence; they should be like stern, inflexible monitors, that nothing can prevent from discharging their duty. Surely, if there is any thing with which we should not mix up our vanity and self-consequence, it is with Time, the most independent of all things. All the sublimity, all the superstition that hang upon this palpable mode of announcing its flight, are chiefly attached to this circumstance. Time would lose its abstracted character, if we kept it like a curiosity or a jack-in-a-box: its prophetic warnings would have no effect, if it obviously spoke only at our prompting, like a paltry ventriloquism. The clock that tells the coming, dreaded hour—the castle bell, that 'with its brazen throat and iron tongue, sounds one unto the drowsy ear of night'—the curfew, 'swinging slow with sullen roar' o'er wizard stream or fountain, are like a voice from other worlds, big with unknown events. The last sound, which is still kept up as an old custom in many parts of England, is a great favourite with me. I used to hear it when a boy. It tells a tale of other times. The days that are past, the generations that are gone, the tangled forest glades and hamlets brown of my native country, the woodsman's art, the Norman warrior armed for the battle or in his festive hall, the conqueror's iron rule and peasant's lamp extinguished, all start up at the clamorous peal, and fill my mind with fear and wonder. I confess, nothing at present interests me but what has been—the recollection of the impressions of my early life, or events long past of which only the dim traces remain in a smouldering ruin or half-obsolete custom. That *things should be that are now no more*, creates in my mind the most unfeigned astonishment. I cannot solve the mystery of the past, nor exhaust my pleasure in it. The years, the generations to come, are nothing to me. We care no more about the world in the year 2300 than we do about one of the planets. Even George IV. is better than the Earl of Windsor. We might as well make a voyage to the moon as think of stealing a march upon Time with impunity. *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.* Those who are to come after us and push us from the stage seem like upstarts and pretenders, that may be said to exist *in vacuo*, we know not upon what, except as they are blown up with vain and self conceit by their patrons among the moderns. But the ancients are true and *bonâ-fide* people, to whom we are bound by aggregate knowledge and filial ties, and in whom seen by the mellow light of history we feel our own existence doubled and our pride consoled, as we ruminate on the vestiges of the past. The public in general, however, do not carry this speculative indifference about the future to what is to happen to themselves, or to the part they are to act in the busy scene. For my own part, I do; and the only wish I can form, or that ever prompts the passing sigh, would be to live some of my years over again—they would be those in which I enjoyed and suffered most!

The ticking of a clock in the night has nothing very interesting nor very alarming in it, though superstition has magnified it into an omen. In a state of vigilance or debility, it preys upon the spirits like the persecution of a teazing pertinacious insect; and haunting the imagination after it has ceased in reality, is converted into the death-watch. Time is rendered vast by contemplating its minute portions thus repeatedly and painfully urged upon its attention, as the ocean in its immensity is composed of water-drops. A clock striking with a clear and silver sound is a great relief in such circumstances, breaks the spell, and resembles a sylph-like and friendly spirit in the room. Foreigners, with all their tricks and contrivances upon clocks and time-pieces, are strangers to the sound of village-bells, though perhaps a people that can dance may dispense with them. They impart a pensive, wayward pleasure to the mind, and are a kind of chronology of happy events, often serious in the retrospect—births, marriages, and so forth. Coleridge calls them 'the poor man's only music.' A village-spire in England peeping from its cluster of trees is always associated in imagination with this cheerful accompaniment, and may be expected to pour its joyous tidings on the gale. In Catholic countries, you are stunned with the everlasting tolling of bells to prayers or for the dead. In the Apennines, and other wild and mountainous districts of Italy, the little chapel-bell with its simple tinkling sound has a romantic and charming effect. The Monks in former times appear to have taken a pride in the construction of bells as well as churches; and some of those of the great cathedrals abroad (as at Cologne and Rouen) may be fairly said to be hoarse with counting the flight of ages. The chimes in Holland are a nuisance. They dance in the hours and the quarters. They leave no respite to the imagination. Before one set has done ringing in your ears, another begins. You do not know whether the hours move or stand still, go backwards or forwards, so fantastical and perplexing are their accompaniments. Time is a more staid personage, and not so full of gambols. It puts you in mind of a tune with variations, or of an embroidered dress. Surely, nothing is more simple than time. His march is straightforward; but we should have leisure allowed us to look back upon the distance we have come, and not be counting his steps every moment. Time in Holland is a foolish old fellow with all the antics of a youth, who 'goes to church in a coranto, and lights his pipe in a cinque-pace.' The chimes with us, on the contrary, as they come in every three or four hours, are like stages in the journey of the day. They give a fillip to the lazy, creeping hours, and relieve the lassitude of country-places. At noon, their desultory, trivial song is diffused through the hamlet with the odour of rashers of bacon; at the close of day they send the toil-worn sleepers to their beds. Their discontinuance would be a great loss to the thinking or unthinking public. Mr. Wordsworth has painted their effect on the mind when he makes his friend Matthew, in a fit of inspired dotage,

'Sing those witty rhymes
About the crazy old church-clock
And the bewilder'd chimes.'

The tolling of the bell for deaths and executions is a fearful summons, though, as it announces, not the advance of time but the approach of fate, it happily makes no part of our subject. Otherwise, the 'sound of the bell' for Macheath's execution in the 'Beggar's Opera,' or for that of the Conspirators in 'Venice Preserved,' with the roll of the drum at a soldier's funeral, and a digression to that of my Uncle Toby, as it is so finely described by Sterne, would furnish ample topics to descant upon. If I were a moralist, I might disapprove the ringing in the new and ringing out the old year.

'Why dance ye, mortals, o'er the grave of Time?'

St Paul's bell tolls only for the death of our English kings, or a distinguished personage or two, with long intervals between.[1]

Those who have no artificial means of ascertaining the progress of time, are in general the most acute in discerning its immediate signs, and are most retentive of individual dates. The mechanical aids to knowledge are not sharpeners of the wits. The understanding of a savage is a kind of natural almanac, and more true in its prognostication of the future. In his mind's eye he sees what has happened or what is likely to happen to him, 'as in a map the voyager his course.' Those who read the times and seasons in the aspect of the heavens and the configurations of the stars, who count by moons and know when the sun rises and sets, are by no means ignorant of their own affairs or of the common concatenation of events. People in such situations have not their faculties distracted by any multiplicity of inquiries beyond what befalls themselves, and the outward appearances that mark the change. There is, therefore, a simplicity and clearness in the knowledge they possess, which often puzzles the more learned. I am sometimes surprised at a shepherd-boy by the roadside, who sees nothing but the earth and sky, asking me the time of day—he ought to know so much better than any one how far the sun is above the horizon. I suppose he wants to ask a question of a passenger, or to see if he has a watch. Robinson Crusoe lost his reckoning in the monotony of his life and that bewildering dream of solitude, and was fain to have recourse to the notches in a piece of wood. What a diary was his! And how time must have spread its circuit round him, vast and pathless as the ocean!

For myself, I have never had a watch nor any other mode of keeping time in my possession, nor ever wish to learn how time goes. It is a sign I have had little to do, few avocations, few engagements. When I am in a town, I can hear the clock; and when I am in the country, I can listen to the silence. What I like best is to lie whole mornings on a sunny bank on Salisbury Plain, without any object before me, neither knowing nor caring how time passes, and thus 'with light-winged toys of feathered Idleness' to melt down hours to moments. Perhaps some such thoughts as I have here set down float before me like motes before my half-shut eyes, or some vivid image of the past by forcible contrast rushes by me—'Diana and her fawn, and all the glories of the antique world;' then I start away to prevent the iron from entering my soul, and let fall some tears into that stream of time which separates me farther and farther from all I once loved! At length I rouse myself from my reverie, and home to dinner, proud of killing time with thought, nay even without thinking. Somewhat of this idle humour I inherit from my father, though he had not the same freedom from *ennui*, for he was not a metaphysician; and there were stops and vacant intervals in his being which he did not know how to fill up. He used in these cases, and as an obvious resource, carefully to wind up his watch at night, and 'with lack-lustre eye' more than once in the course of the day look to see what o'clock it was. Yet he had nothing else in his character in common with the elder Mr. Shandy. Were I to attempt a sketch of him, for my own or the reader's satisfaction, it would be after the following manner:——but now I recollect, I have done something of the kind once before, and were I to resume the subject here, some bat or owl of a critic, with spectacled gravity, might swear I had stolen the whole of this Essay from myself—or (what is worse) from him! So I had better let it go as it is.

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[1] Rousseau has admirably described the effect of bells on the imagination in a passage in the Confessions, beginning '*Le son des cloches m'a toujours singulièrement affecté,*' &c

WHY THE HEROES OF ROMANCE ARE INSIPID

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*November*, 1827.

Because it is taken for granted that they must be amiable and interesting, in the first instance, and like other things that are taken for granted, is but indifferently, or indeed cannot be made out at all in the sequel. To put it to the proof, to give illustrations of it, would be to throw a doubt upon the question. They have only to show themselves to ensure conquest. Indeed, the reputation of their victories goes before them, and is a pledge of their success before they even appear. They are, or are supposed to be, so amiable, so handsome, so accomplished, so captivating, that all hearts bow before them, and all the women are in love with them without knowing why or wherefore, except that it is understood that they are to be so. All obstacles vanish without a finger lifted or a word spoken, and the effect is produced without a blow being struck. When there is this imaginary charm at work, every thing they could do or say must weaken the impression, like arguments brought in favour of a self-evident truth: they very wisely say or do little or nothing, rely on their names and the author's good word, look, smile, and are adored; but to all but the heroines of romance and their confidantes, are exceedingly uninteresting and *common-place* personages, either great coxcombs or wonderfully insipid. When a lover is able to look unutterable things which produce the desired effect, what occasion for him to exert his eloquence or make an impassioned speech in order to bring about a revolution in his favour, which is already accomplished by other less doubtful means? When the impression at first sight is complete and irresistible, why throw away any farther thoughts or words to make it more so? This were 'to gild refined gold, to paint the lily, to smooth the ice, to throw a perfume on the violet, or add another hue unto the rainbow, or seek with taper-light the beauteous eye of Heaven to garnish,' which has been pronounced to be 'wasteful and superfluous excess.' Authors and novel-writers therefore reserve for their second-rate and less prominent characters, the artillery of words, the arts of persuasion, and all the unavailing battery of hopeless attentions and fine sentiment, which are of no use to the more accomplished gallant, who makes his triumphant approaches by stolen glances and breathing sighs, and whose appearance alone supersedes the disclosure of all his other implied perfections and an importunate display of a long list of titles to the favour of the fair, which, as they are not insisted on, it would be vain and unbecoming to produce to the gaze of the world, or for the edification of the curious reader. It is quite enough if the lady is satisfied with her choice, and if (as generally happens both as a cause and consequence in such cases) the gentleman is satisfied with himself. If he indeed seemed to entertain a doubt upon the subject, the spell of his fascination would be broken, and the author would be obliged to derogate from the *beau-ideal* of his character, and make him do something to deserve the good opinion that might be entertained of him, and to which he himself had not led the way by boundless self-complacency and the conscious assurance of infallible success.

Another circumstance that keeps our novel-heroes in the background is, that if there was any doubt of their success, or they were obliged to employ the ordinary and vulgar means to establish their superiority over every one else, they would be no longer those 'faultless monsters' which it is understood that they must be to fill their part in the drama. The discarded or despairing, not the favoured lovers, are unavoidably the most interesting persons in the story. In fact, the principals are already disposed of in the first page; they are destined for each other by an unaccountable and uncontrollable sympathy: the ceremony is in a manner over, and they are already married people, with all the lawful attributes and indifference belonging to the character. To produce an interest, there must be mixed motives, alternate hope and fear, difficulties to struggle with, sacrifices to make; but the true hero of romance is too fine a gentleman to be subjected to this rude ordeal, or mortifying exposure, which devolves upon some much more unworthy and unpretending personage. The beauty of the outline must not be disturbed by the painful conflicts of passion or the strong contrast of light and shade. The taste of the heroic cannot swerve for a moment from the object of its previous choice, who must never be placed in disadvantageous circumstances The top characters occupy a certain prescriptive rank in the world of romance, by the rules of etiquette and laws of this sort of fictitious composition, reign like princes, and have only to do nothing to forfeit their privileges or compromise their supposed dignity.

The heroes of the old romances, the Grand Cyruses, the Artamenes, and Oroondates, are in this respect better than the moderns. They had their steel helmet and plume of feathers, the glittering spear and shield, the barbed steed, and the spread banner, and had knightly service to perform in joust and tournament, in the field of battle or the deep forest, besides the duty which they owed to their 'mistress' eyebrow,' and the favours they received at her hands. They were comparatively picturesque and adventurous personages, and men of action in the tented field, and lost all title to the smile of beauty if they did not deserve it by feats of prowess, and by the valour of their arms. However insipid they might be as accepted lovers, in their set speeches and improgressive languishments by which they paid their court to their hearts' idols, the 'fairest of the fair,' yet in their character of warriors and heroes, they were men of mettle, and had something in them. They did not merely sigh and smile and kneel in the presence of their mistresses—they had to unhorse their adversaries in combat, to storm castles, to vanquish giants, and lead armies. So far, so well. In the good old times of chivalry and romance, favour was won and maintained by the bold achievements and fair fame of the chosen knight, which keeps up a show of suspense and dramatic interest, instead of depending, as in more effeminate times, on taste, sympathy, and a refinement of sentiment and manners, of the delicacy of which it is impossible to convey any idea by words or actions. Even in the pompous and affected courtship of the romances of the seventeenth century (now, alas! exploded) the interviews between the lovers are so rare and guarded, their union, though agreed upon and inevitable, is so remote, the smile with which the lady regards her sworn champion, though as steady as that of one of the fixed stars, is like them so cold, as to give a tone of passion and interest to their enamoured flights, as though they were affected by the chances and changes of sublunary affairs. I confess I have read some of these fabulous folios formerly with no small degree of delight and breathless anxiety, particularly that of 'Cassandra'; and would willingly indeed go over it again to catch even a faint, a momentary glimpse of the pleasure with which I used at one period to peruse its prolix descriptions and high-flown sentiments. Not only the Palmerins of England and Amadises of Gaul, who made their way to their mistresses' hearts by slaying giants and taming dragons, but the heroes of the French romances of intrigue and gallantry which succeeded those of necromancy and chivalry, and where the adventurers for the prize have to break through the fences of morality and scruples of conscience instead of stone-walls and enchantments dire, are to be excepted from the censure of downright insipidity which attaches to those ordinary drawing-room heroes, who are installed in the good graces of their Divinities by a look, and keep their places there by the force of *still life*! It is Gray who cries out, 'Be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon!' I could say the same of those of Madame La Fayette and the Duke de la Rochefoucault. 'The Princess of Cleves' is a most charming work of this kind; and the Duke de Nemours is a great favourite with me. He is perhaps the most brilliant personage that ever entered upon the *tapis* of a drawing-room, or trifled at a lady's toilette.

I prefer him, I own, vastly to Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison, whom I look upon as the prince of coxcombs; and so much the more impertinent as he is a moral one. His character appears to me 'ugly all over with affectation.' There is not a single thing that Sir Charles Grandison does or says all through the book from liking to any person or object but himself, and with a view to answer to a certain standard of perfection for which he pragmatically sets up. He is always thinking of himself, and trying to show that he is the wisest, happiest, and most virtuous person in the whole world. He is (or would be thought) a code of Christian ethics; a compilation and abstract of all gentlemanly accomplishments. There is nothing, I conceive, that excites so little sympathy as this inordinate egotism; or so much disgust as this everlasting self-complacency. Yet this self-admiration, brought forward on every occasion as the incentive to every action and reflected from all around him, is the burden and pivot of the story. 'Is not the man Sir Charles Grandison?'—is what he and all the other persons concerned are continually repeating to themselves. His preference of the little, insignificant, selfish, affected, puritanical Miss Byron, who is remarkable for nothing but her conceit of herself and her lover, to the noble Clementina, must for ever stamp him for the poltroon and blockhead that he was. What a contrast between these two females—the one, the favourite heroine, settling her idle punctilios and the choice of her ribbons for the wedding-day with equal interest, the other, self-devoted, broken-hearted, generous, disinterested, pouring out her whole soul in the fervent expressions and dying struggles of an unfortunate and hopeless affection! It was impossible indeed for the genius of the author (strive all he could) to put the prettinesses an coquettish scruples of the bride-elect upon a par with the eloquen despair and impassioned sentiments of her majestic but unsuccessfu rival. Nothing can show more clearly that the height of good fortun and of that conventional faultlessness which is supposed to secure it, i incompatible with any great degree of interest. Lady Clementin should have been married to Sir Charles to surfeit her of a coxcom —Miss Byron to Lovelace to plague her with a rake! Have w not sometimes seen such matches? A slashing critic of my acquaintance once observed, that 'Richardson would be surprised in the nex world to find Lovelace in Heaven and Grandison in Hell!' Without going this orthodox length, I must say there is something i Lovelace's vices more attractive than in the other's best virtues Clarissa's attachment seems as natural as Clementina's is romantic There is a *regality* about Lovelace's manner, and he appears clothe in a panoply of wit, gaiety, spirit, and enterprise, that is criticism-proof. If he had not possessed these dazzling qualities, nothin could have made us forgive for an instant his treatment of the spotles Clarissa; but indeed they might be said to be mutually attracted t and extinguished in each other's dazzling lustre! When we thin of Lovelace and his luckless exploits, we can hardly be persuaded a this time of day that he wore a wig. Yet that he did so is evident for Miss Howe when she gave him that spirited box on the ear struck the powder out of it! Mr. B. in 'Pamela' has all the insipidity that arises from patronising beauty and condescending to virtue Pamela herself is delightfully made out; but she labours unde considerable disadvantages, and is far from a *regular* heroine.

Sterne (thank God!) has neither hero nor heroine, and he doe very well without them.

Many people find fault with Fielding's Tom Jones as gross an immoral. For my part, I have doubts of his being so very handsom from the author's always talking about his beauty, and I suspect h was a clown, from being constantly assured he was so very genteel Otherwise, I think Jones acquits himself very well both in his action and speeches, as a lover and as a *trencher-man* whenever he is calle upon. Some persons, from their antipathy to that headlong impulse of which Jones was the slave, and to that morality of good-natur which in him is made a foil to principle, have gone so far as to prefe Blifil as the *prettier fellow* of the two. I certainly cannot subscrib to this opinion, which perhaps was never meant to have followers, an has nothing but its singularity to recommend it. Joseph Andrews i a hero of the shoulder-knot: it would be hard to canvass his pretensions too severely, especially considering what a patron he has i

Parson Adams. That one character would cut up into a hundred fine gentlemen and novel-heroes! Booth is another of the good-natured tribe, a fine man, a very fine man! But there is a want of spirit to animate the well-meaning mass. He hardly deserved to have the hashed mutton kept waiting for him. The author has redeemed himself in Amelia; but a heroine with a *broken nose* and who was a married woman besides, must be rendered truly interesting and amiable to make up for superficial objections. The character of the Noble Peer in this novel is *not* insipid. If Fielding could have made virtue as admirable as he could make vice detestable, he would have been a greater master even than he was. I do not understand what those critics mean who say he got all his characters out of ale-houses. It is true he did some of them.

Smollett's heroes are neither one thing nor the other: neither very refined nor very insipid. Wilson in Humphrey Clinker comes the nearest to the *beau-ideal* of this character, the favourite of the novel-reading and boarding-school girl. Narcissa and Emilia Gauntlet are very charming girls; and Monimia in Count Fathom is a fine monumental beauty. But perhaps he must be allowed to be most *at home* in Winifred Jenkins!

The women have taken this matter up in our own time: let us see what they have made of it. Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes and lovers are perfect in their kind; nobody can find any fault with them, for nobody knows any thing about them. They are described as very handsome, and quite unmeaning and inoffensive.

> 'Her heroes have no character at all.'

Theodore, Valancourt,—what delightful names! and there is nothing else to distinguish them by. Perhaps, however, this indefiniteness is an advantage. We add expression to the inanimate outline, and fill up the blank with all that is amiable, interesting, and romantic. A long ride without a word spoken, a meeting that comes to nothing, a parting look, a moonlight scene, or evening skies that paint their sentiments for them better than the lovers can do for themselves, farewells too full of anguish, deliverances too big with joy to admit of words, suppressed sighs, faint smiles, the freshness of the morning, pale melancholy, the clash of swords, the clank of chains that make the fair one's heart sink within her, these are the chief means by which the admired authoress of 'The Romance of the Forest' and 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' keeps alive an ambiguous interest in the bosom of her fastidious readers, and elevates the lover into the hero of the fable. Unintelligible distinctions, impossible attempts, a delicacy that shrinks from the most trifling objection, and an enthusiasm that rushes on its fate, such are the charming and teazing contradictions that form the flimsy texture of a modern romance! If the lover in such critical cases was any thing but a lover, he would cease to be the most amiable of all characters in the abstract and by way of excellence, and would be a traitor to the cause; to give reasons or to descend to particulars, is to doubt the omnipotence of love and shake the empire of credulous fancy; a sounding name, a graceful form, are all that is necessary to suspend the whole train of tears, sighs, and the softest emotions upon; the ethereal nature of the passion requires ethereal food to sustain it; and our youthful hero, in order to be perfectly interesting, must be drawn as perfectly insipid!

I cannot, however, apply this charge to Mrs. Inchbald's heroes or heroines. However finely drawn, they are an essence of sentiment. Their words are composed of the warmest breath, their tears scald, their sighs stifle. Her characters seem moulded of a softer clay, the work of fairest hands. Miss Milner is enchanting. Doriforth indeed is severe, and has a very stately opinion of himself, but he has spirit and passion. Lord Norwynne is the most unpleasant and obdurate. He seduces by his situation and kills by indifference, as is natural in such cases. But still through all these the fascination of the writer's personal feelings never quits you. On the other hand, Miss Burney's (Madame D'Arblay's) *forte* is ridicule, or an exquisite tact for minute absurdities, and when she aims at being fine she only becomes affected. No one had ever much less of the romantic. Lord Orville is a condescending suit of clothes; yet certainly the sense which Evelina has of the honour done her is very prettily managed. Sir Clement Willoughby is a much gayer and more animated person, though his wit outruns his discretion. Young Delville is the hero of punctilio—a perfect diplomatist in the art of love-making—and draws his parallels and sits down as deliberately before the citadel of his mistress's heart, as a cautious general lays siege to an impregnable fortress. Cecilia is not behind-hand with him in the game of studied cross-purposes and affected delays, and is almost the veriest and most provoking trifler on record. Miss Edgeworth, I believe, has no heroes. Her *trenchant* pen cuts away all extravagance and idle pretence, and leaves nothing but common sense, prudence, and propriety behind it, wherever it comes.

I do not apprehend that the heroes of the Author of Waverley form any very striking exception to the common rule. They conform to their designation and follow the general law of their being. They are for the most part very equivocal and undecided personages, who receive their governing impulse from accident, or are puppets in the hands of their mistresses, such as Waverley, Ivanhoe, Frank Osbaldistone, Henry Morton, &c. I do not say that any of these are absolutely insipid, but they have in themselves no leading or master-traits, and they are worked out of very listless and inert materials into a degree of force and prominence solely by the genius of the author. Instead of acting, they are acted upon, and keep in the back-ground and in a neutral posture, till they are absolutely forced to come forward, and it is then with a very amiable reservation of modest scruples. Does it not seem almost, or generally speaking, as if a character to be put in this responsible situation of candidate for the highest favour of the public at large, or of the fair in particular, who is to conciliate all suffrages and concentrate all interests, must really have nothing in him to please or give offence, that he must be left a negative, feeble character without untractable or uncompromising points, and with a few slight recommendations and obvious good qualities which every one may be supposed to improve upon and fill up according to his or her inclination or fancy and the model of perfection previously existing in the mind? It is a privilege claimed, no doubt, by the fair reader to make out the object of her admiration and interest according to her own choice; and the same privilege, if not openly claimed, may be covertly exercised by others. We are all fond of our own creations, and if the author does little to his chief character and allows us to have a considerable hand in it, it may not suffer in our opinion from this circumstance. In fact, the hero of the work is not so properly the chief object in it, as a sort of blank left open to the imagination, or a lay-figure on which the reader disposes whatever drapery he pleases! Of all Sir Walter's characters the most dashing and spirited is the Sultan Saladin. But he is not meant for a hero, nor fated to be a lover. He is a collateral and incidental performer in the scene. His movements therefore remain free, and he is master of his own resplendent energies, which produce so much the more daring and felicitous an effect. So far from being intended to please all tastes or the most squeamish, he is not meant for any taste. He has no pretensions, and stands upon the sole ground of his own heroic acts and sayings. The author has none of the timidity or mawkishness arising from a fear of not coming up to his own professions, or to the expectations excited in the reader's mind. Any striking trait, any interesting exploit is more than was bargained for—is heaped measure, running over. There is no idle, nervous apprehension of falling short of perfection, arresting the hand or diverting the mind from truth and nature. If the Pagan is not represented as a monster and barbarian, all the rest is a god-send. Accordingly all is spontaneous, bold, and original in this beautiful and glowing design, which is as magnificent as it is magnanimous.—Lest I should forget it, I will mention while I am on the subject of Scotch novels, that Mackenzie's 'Man of Feeling' is not without interest, but it is an interest brought out in a very singular and unprecedented way. He not merely says or does nothing to deserve the approbation of the goddess of his idolatry, but from extreme shyness and sensitiveness, instead of presuming on his merits, gets out of her way, and only declares his passion on his death-bed. Poor Harley!—Mr. Godwin's Falkland is a very high and heroic character: he, however, is not a love-hero; and the only part in which an episode of this kind is introduced, is of the most trite and mawkish description. The case is different in St. Leon. The author's resuscitated hero there quaffs joy, love, and immortality with a considerable *gusto*, and with appropriate manifestations of triumph.

As to the heroes of the philosophical school of romance, such as Goethe's Werther, &c., they are evidently out of the pale of this reasoning. Instead of being common-place and insipid, they are one violent and startling paradox from beginning to end. Instead of being cast in stiff unmeaning mould, they 'all germins spill at once' that make mere mortal men. They run a-tilt at all established usages and prejudices, and overset all the existing order of society. There is plenty of interest here; and instead of complaining of a calm, we are borne along by a hurricane of passion and eloquence, certainly without any thing of 'temperance that may give it smoothness.' Schiller's Moor, Kotzebue's heroes, and all the other German prodigies are of this stamp.

Shakspeare's lovers and Boccaccio's I like much: they seem to me full of tenderness and manly spirit, and free from insipidity and cant. Otway's Jaffier is, however, the true woman's man—full of passion and effeminacy, a mixture of strength and weakness. Perhaps what I have said above may suggest the true reason and apology for Milton's having unwittingly made Satan the hero of 'Paradise Lost.' He suffers infinite losses, and makes the most desperate efforts to recover or avenge them; and it is the struggle with fate and the privation of happiness that sharpens our desires, or enhances our sympathy with good or evil. We have little interest in unalterable felicity, nor can we join with heart and soul in the endless symphonies and exulting hallelujahs of the spirits of the blest. The remorse of a fallen spirit or 'tears such as angels shed' touch us more nearly.

THE SHYNESS OF SCHOLARS

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*December*, 1827.

'And of his port as meek as is a maid.'

Scholars lead a contemplative and retired life, both which circumstances must be supposed to contribute to the effect in question. A life of study is also conversant with high and *ideal* models, which gives an ambitious turn to the mind; and pride is nearly akin to delicacy of feeling.

That a life of privacy and obscurity should render its votaries bashful and awkward, or unfit them for the routine of society, from the want both of a habit of going into company and from ignorance of its usages, is obvious to remark. No one can be expected to do that well or without a certain degree of hesitation and restraint, which he is not accustomed to do except on particular occasions, and at rare intervals. You might as rationally set a scholar or a clown on a tight-rope and expect them to dance gracefully and with every appearance of ease, as introduce either into the gay, laughing circle, and suppose that he will acquit himself handsomely and come off with applause in the retailing of anecdote or the interchange of repartee. 'If you have not seen the Court, your manners must be naught; and if your manners are naught, you must be damned,' according to Touchstone's reasoning. The other cause lies rather deeper, and is so far better worth considering, perhaps. A student, then, that is, a man who condemns himself to toil for a length of time and through a number of volumes in order to arrive at a conclusion, naturally loses that smartness and ease which distinguish the gay and thoughtless rattler. There is a certain elasticity of movement and hey-day of the animal spirits seldom to be met with but in those who have never cared for any thing beyond the moment, or looked lower than the surface. The scholar having to encounter doubts and difficulties on all hands, and indeed to apply by way of preference to those subjects which are most beset with mystery, becomes hesitating, sceptical, irresolute, absent, dull. All the processes of his mind are slow, cautious, circuitous, instead of being prompt, heedless, straightforward. Finding the intricacies of the path increase upon him in every direction, this can hardly be supposed to add to the lightness of his step, the confidence of his brow as he advances. He does not skim the surface, but dives under it like the mole to make his way darkling, by imperceptible degrees, and throwing up heaps of dirt and rubbish over his head to track his progress. He is therefore startled at any sudden light, puzzled by any casual question, taken unawares and at a disadvantage in every critical emergency. He must have time given him to collect his thoughts, to consider objections, to make farther inquiries, and come to no conclusion at last. This is very different from the dashing, *off-hand* manner of the mere man of business or fashion; and he who is repeatedly found in situations to which he is unequal (particularly if he is of a reflecting and candid temper) will be apt to look foolish, and to lose both his countenance and his confidence in himself—at least as to the opinion others entertain of him, and the figure he is likely on any occasion to make in the eyes of the world. The course of his studies has not made him wise, but has taught him the uncertainty of wisdom; and has supplied him with excellent reasons for suspending his judgment, when another would throw the casting-weight of his own presumption or interest into the scale.

The inquirer after truth learns to take nothing for granted; least of all, to make an assumption of his own superior merits. He would have nothing proceed without proper proofs and an exact scrutiny; and would neither be imposed upon himself, nor impose upon others by shallow and hasty appearances. It takes years of patient toil and devoted enthusiasm to master any art or science; and after all, the success is doubtful. He infers that other triumphs must be prepared in like manner at an humble distance: he cannot bring himself to imagine that any object worth seizing on or deserving of regard, can be carried by a *coup de main.* So far from being proud or puffed up by them, he would be ashamed and degraded in his own opinion by any advantages that were to be obtained by such cheap and vulgar means as putting a good face on the matter, as strutting and vapouring about his own pretensions. He would not place himself on a level with bullies or coxcombs; nor believe that those whose favour he covets, can be the dupes of either. Whatever is excellent in his fanciful creed is hard of attainment; and he would (perhaps absurdly enough) have the means in all cases answerable to the end. He knows that there are difficulties in his favourite pursuits to puzzle the will, to tire the patience, to unbrace the strongest nerves, and make the stoutest courage quail; and he would fain think that if there is any object more worthy than another to call forth the earnest solicitude, the hopes and fears of a wise man, and to make his heart yearn within him at the most distant prospect of success, this precious prize in the grand lottery of life is not to be had for the asking for, or from the mere easy indifference or overbearing effrontery with which you put in your claim. He is aware that it will be long enough before any one paints a fine picture by walking up and down and admiring himself in the glass; or writes a fine poem by being delighted with the sound of his own voice; or solves a single problem in philosophy by swaggering and haughty airs. He conceives that it is the same with the way of the world—woos the fair as he woos the Muse; in conversation never puts in a word till he has something better to say than any one else in the room; in business never strikes while the iron is hot, and flings away all his advantages by endeavouring to prove to his own and the satisfaction of others, that he is clearly entitled to them. It never once enters into his head (till it is too late) that impudence is the current coin in the affairs of life; that he who doubts his own merit, never has credit given him by others; that Fortune does not stay to have her overtures canvassed; that he who neglects opportunity, can seldom command it a second time; that the world judge by appearances, not by realities; and that they sympathise more readily with those who are prompt to do themselves justice, and to show off their various qualifications or enforce their pretensions to the utmost, than with those who wait for others to award their claims, and carry their fastidious refinement into helplessness and imbecility. Thus 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread;' and modest merit finds to its cost, that the bold hand and dauntless brow succeed where timidity and bashfulness are pushed aside; that the gay, laughing eye is preferred to dejection and gloom, health and animal spirits to the shattered, sickly frame and trembling nerves; and that to succeed in life, a man should carry about with him the outward and incontrovertible signs of success, and of his satisfaction with himself and his prospects, instead of plaguing every body near him with fantastical scruples and his ridiculous anxiety to realise an unattainable standard of perfection. From holding back himself, the speculative enthusiast is thrust back by others: his pretensions are insulted and trampled on; and the repeated and pointed repulses he meets with, make him still more unwilling to encounter, and more unable to contend with those that await him in the prosecution of his career. He therefore retires from the contest altogether, or remains in the back-ground, a passive but uneasy spectator of a scene, in which he finds from experience, that confidence, alertness, and superficial acquirements are of more avail than all the refinement and delicacy in the world. Action, in truth, is referable chiefly to quickness and strength of resolution, rather than to depth of reasoning or scrupulous nicety: again, it is to be presumed that those who show a proper reliance on themselves, will not betray the trust we place in them through pusillanimity or want of spirit: in what relates to the opinion of others, which is often formed hastily and on slight acquaintance, much must be allowed to what strikes the senses, to what excites the imagination; and in all popular worldly schemes, popular and worldly means must be resorted to, instead of depending wholly on the hidden and intrinsic merits of the case.

'In peace, there 's nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness, and humility:
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tyger;
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage:
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;
Let it pry through the portage of the head,
Like the brass cannon; let the brow o'erwhelm it,
As fearfully, as doth a galled rock
O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean.'

This advice (sensible as it is) is abhorrent to the nature of a man who is accustomed to place all his hopes of victory in reasoning and reflection only. The noisy, rude, gratuitous success of those who have taken so much less pains to deserve it, disgusts and disheartens him—he loses his self-possession and self-esteem, has no standard left by which to measure himself or others, and as he cannot be brought to admire them, persuades himself at last that the blame rests with himself; and instead of bespeaking a fashionable dress, learning to bow, or taking a few lessons in boxing or fencing to brace his nerves and raise his spirits, aggravates all his former faults by way of repairing them, grows more jealous of the propriety of every word and look, lowers his voice into a whisper, gives his style the last polish, reconsiders his arguments, refines his sentiments till they evaporate in a sigh, and thus satisfies himself that he can hardly fail, that men judge impartially in the end, that the public will sooner or later do him justice, Fortune smile, and the Fair no longer be averse! *Oh malore!* He is just where he was, or ten times worse off than ever.

There is another circumstance that tends not a little to perplex the judgment, and add to the difficulties of the retired student, when he comes out into the world. He is like one dropped from the clouds. He has hitherto conversed chiefly with historic personages and abstract propositions, and has no just notion of actual men and things. He does not well know how to reconcile the sweeping conclusions he has been taught to indulge in to the cautious and pliant maxims of the world, nor how to compare himself, an inhabitant of Utopia, with sublunary mortals. He has been habituated all his life to look up to a few great names handed down by virtue or science as the 'Gods of his idolatry,' as the fixed stars in the firmament of reputation, and to have some respect for himself and other learned men as votaries at the shrine and as appreciating the merits of their idol; but all the rest of the world, who are neither the objects of this sort of homage, nor concerned as a sort of priesthood in collecting and paying it, he looks upon as actually nobody, or as worms crawling upon the face of the earth without intellectual value or pretensions. He is, therefore, a little surprised and shocked to find, when he deigns to mingle with his fellows, those every-day mortals, on ordinary terms, that they are of a height nearly equal to himself, that they have words, ideas, feelings in common with the best, and are not the mere cyphers he had been led to consider them. From having under-rated, he comes to over-rate them. Having dreamt of no such thing, he is more struck with what he finds than perhaps it deserves; magnifies the least glimpse of sense or humour into sterling wit or wisdom; is startled by any objection from so unexpected a quarter; thinks his own advantages of no avail, because they are not the only ones, and shrinks from an encounter with weapons he has not been used to, and from a struggle by which he feels himself degraded. The Knight of La Mancha when soundly beaten by the packstaves of the Yanguesian carriers, laid all the blame on his having condescended to fight with plebeians. The pride of learning comes in to aid the awkwardness and bashfulness of the inexperienced novice, converting his want of success into the shame and mortification of defeat in what he habitually considers as a contest with inferiors. Indeed, those will always be found to submit with the worst grace to any check or reverse of this kind in common conversation or reasoning, who have been taught to set the most exclusive and disproportioned value on letters: and the most enlightened and accomplished scholars will be less likely to be humbled or put to the blush by the display of common sense or native talent, than the more ignorant, self-sufficient, and pedantic among the learned; for that ignorance, self-sufficiency, and pedantry, are sometimes to be reckoned among the attributes of learning, cannot be disputed. These qualities are not very reconcilable with modest merit; but they are quite consistent with a great deal of blundering, confusion, and want of *tact* in the commerce of the world. The genuine scholar retires from an unequal conflict into silence and obscurity: the pedant swells into self-importance, and renders himself conspicuous by pompous arrogance and absurdity!

It is hard upon those who have ever taken pains or done any thing to distinguish themselves, that they are seldom the trumpeters o their own achievements; and I believe it may be laid down as rule, that we receive just as much homage from others as we exac from them by our own declarations, looks, and manner. But n one who has performed any thing great looks big upon it: thos who have any thing to boast of are generally silent on that head, an altogether shy of the subject. With Coriolanus, they 'will not hav their nothings monster'd.' From familiarity, his own acquirement do not appear so extraordinary to the individual as to others; an there is a natural want of sympathy in this respect. No one wh is really capable of great things is proud or vain of his success; fo he thinks more of what he had hoped or has failed to do, than o what he has done. A habit of extreme exertion, or of anxiou suspense, is not one of buoyant, overweening self-complacency: thos who have all their lives tasked their faculties to the utmost, may b supposed to have quite enough to do without having much dispositio left to anticipate their success with confidence, or to glory in i afterwards. The labours of the mind, like the drudgery of th body, depress and take away the usual alacrity of the spirits. No can such persons be lifted up with the event; for the impression o the consequences to result from any arduous undertaking must b light and vain, compared with the toil and anxiety accompanying it It is only those who have done nothing, who fancy they can d every thing; or who have leisure and inclination to admire themselves. To sit before a glass and smile delighted at our own image is merely a tax on our egotism and self-conceit; and these ar resources not easily exhausted in some persons; or if they are, th deficiency is supplied by flatterers who surround the vain, like natural atmosphere. Fools who take all their opinions at secon hand cannot resist the coxcomb's delight in himself; or it migh be said that folly is the natural mirror of vanity. The greates heroes, it has often been observed, do not show it in their faces nor do philosophers affect to be thought wise. Little minds triump on small occasions, or over puny competitors: the loftiest wish fo higher opportunities of signalising themselves, or compare themselve with those models that leave them no room for flippant exultation Either great things are accomplished with labour and pains, which stamp their impression on the general character and tone of feeling or if this should not be the case (as sometimes happens), and they are the effect of genius and a happiness of nature, then they cost to little to be much thought of, and we rather wonder at others fo admiring them, than at ourselves for having performed them. 'Vi ea nostra voco'—is the motto of spontaneous talent; and in neithe case is conceit the exuberant growth of great original power or of great attainments.

In one particular, the uneducated man carries it hollow against the man of thought and refinement: the first can shoot in the *long bow*, which the last cannot for the life of him. He who has spent the best part of his time and wasted his best powers in endeavouring to answer the question—'What is truth?'—scorns a lie, and every thing making the smallest approach to one. His mind by habit has become tenacious of, devoted to the truth. The grossness and vulgarity of falsehood shock the delicacy of his perceptions, as much as it would shock the finest artist to be obliged to daub in a sign-post, or scrawl a caricature. He cannot make up his mind to derive any benefit from so pitiful and disgusting a source. Tell me that a man is a metaphysician, and at the same time that he is given to shallow and sordid boasting, and I will not believe you. After striving to raise himself to an equality with truth and nature by patient investigation and refined distinctions (which few can make)—whether he succeed or fail, he cannot stoop to acquire a spurious reputation, or to advance himself or lessen others by paltry artifice and idle rhodomontade, which are in every one's power who has never known the value or undergone the labour of discovering a single truth. Gross personal and local interests bear the principal sway with the ignorant or mere man of the world, who considers not what things are in themselves, but what they are to him: the man of science attaches a higher importance to, because he finds a more constant pleasure in the contemplation and pursuit of general and abstracted truths. Philosophy also teaches self-knowledge; and self-knowledge strikes equally at the root of any inordinate opinion of ourselves, or wish to impress others with idle admiration. Mathematicians have been remarked for persons of strict probity and a conscientious and somewhat literal turn of mind.[1] But are poets and romance-writers equally scrupulous and severe judges of themselves, and martyrs to right principle? I cannot acquit them of the charge of vanity, and a wish to aggrandise themselves in the eyes of the world, at the expense of a little false complaisance (what wonder when the world are so prone to admire, and they are so spoiled by indulgence in self-pleasing fancies?)—but in general they are too much taken up with their *ideal* creations, which have also a truth and keeping of their own, to misrepresent or exaggerate matters of fact, or to trouble their heads about them. The poet's waking thoughts are dreams: the liar has all his wits and sense about him, and thinks only of astonishing his hearers by some worthless assertion, a mixture of impudence and cunning. But what shal we say of the clergy and the priests of all countries? Are they no men of learning? And are they not, with few exceptions, noted fo imposture and time-serving, much more than for a love of truth an candour? They are good subjects, it is true; bound to keep th peace, and hired to maintain certain opinions, not to inquire int them. So this is an exception to the rule, such as might be expected I speak of the natural tendencies of things, and not of the false bia that may be given to them by their forced combination with othe principles.

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[1] I have heard it said that carpenters, who do every thing by the square and line, are honest men, and I am willing to suppose it. Shakspeare, in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' makes Snug the Joiner the *moral* man of the piece.

The worst effect of this depression of spirits, or of the 'scholar' melancholy,' here spoken of, is when it leads a man, from a distrus of himself, to seek for low company, or to forget it by matchin below himself. Gray is to be pitied, whose extreme diffidence o fastidiousness was such as to prevent his associating with his fellow collegians, or mingling with the herd, till at length, like the owl shutting himself up from society and daylight, he was hunted an hooted at like the owl whenever he chanced to appear, and was eve assailed and disturbed in the haunts in which 'he held his solitar reign.' He was driven from college to college, and subjected to persecution the more harassing to a person of his indolent and retire habits. But he only shrunk the more within himself in consequenc —read over his favourite authors—corresponded with his distan friends—was terrified out of his wits at the bare idea of having hi portrait prefixed to his works; and probably died from nervou agitation at the publicity into which his name had been forced b his learning, taste, and genius. This monastic seclusion and reserv is, however, better than a career such as Porson's; who from no liking the restraints, or not possessing the exterior recommendation of good society, addicted himself to the lowest indulgences, spen his days and nights in cider-cellars and pot-houses, cared not wit whom or where he was, so that he had somebody to talk to an something to drink, 'from humble porter to imperial tokay' (*a liquid* according to his own pun), and fell a martyr, in all likelihood, t what in the first instance was pure *mauvaise honte*. Nothing coul overcome this propensity to low society and sotting, but the havin something to do, which required his whole attention and faculties and then he shut himself up for weeks together in his chambers, o at the University, to collate old manuscripts, or edite a Gree tragedy, or expose a grave pedant, without seeing a single boon companion, or touching a glass of wine. I saw him once at th

London Institution with a large patch of coarse brown paper on his nose, the skirts of his rusty black coat hung with cobwebs, and talking in a tone of suavity approaching to condescension to one of the Managers. It is a pity that men should so lose themselves from a certain awkwardness and rusticity at the outset. But did not Sheridan make the same melancholy ending, and run the same fatal career, though in a higher and more brilliant circle? He did; and though not from exactly the same cause (for no one could accuse Sheridan's purple nose and flashing eye of a bashfulness—'modest as morning when she coldly eyes the youthful Phœbus!')—yet it was perhaps from one nearly allied to it, namely, the want of that noble independence and confidence in its own resources which should distinguish genius, and the dangerous ambition to get sponsors and vouchers for it in persons of rank and fashion. The affectation of the society of lords is as mean and low-minded as the love of that of coblers and tapsters. It is that coblers and tapsters may admire, that we wish to be seen in the company of *their* betters. The tone of literary patronage is better than it was a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago. What dramatic author would think now of getting a lady of quality to take a box at the first night of a play to prevent its being damned by the pit? Do we not read the account of Parson Adams taking his ale in Squire Booby's kitchen with mingled incredulity and shame? At present literature has, to a considerable degree, found its level, and is hardly in danger, 'deprived of its natural patrons and protectors, the great and noble, of being trodden in the mire, and trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude'—though it can never again hope, to be what learning once was in the persons of the priesthood, the lord and sovereign of principalities and powers. Fool that it was ever to forego its privileges, and loosen the strong hold it had on opinion in bigotry and superstition!

I remember hearing a lady of great sense and acuteness speak of it as a painful consequence of the natural shyness of scholars, that from the want of a certain address, or an acquaintance with the common forms of society, they despair of making themselves agreeable to women of education and a certain rank in life, and throw away their fine sentiments and romantic tenderness on chambermaids and mantua-makers. Not daring to hope for success where it would be most desirable, yet anxious to realise in some way the dream of books and of their youth, they are willing to accept a return of affection which they count upon as a tribute of gratitude in those of lower circumstances, (as if gratitude were ever bought by interest), and take up with the first Dulcinea del Toboso that they meet with, when, would they only try the experiment, they might do much better. Perhaps so: but there is here also a mixture of pride as well as modesty. The scholar is not only apprehensive of not meeting with a return of fondness where it might be most advantageous to him; but he is afraid of subjecting his self-love to the mortification of a repulse, and to the reproach of aiming at a prize far beyond his deserts. Besides, living (as he does) in an *ideal* world, he has it in his option to clothe his Goddess (be she who or what she may) with all the perfections his heart doats on; and he works up a dowdy of this ambiguous description *à son gré*, as an artist does a piece of dull clay, or the poet the sketch of some unrivalled heroine. The contrast is also the greater (and not the less gratifying as being his own discovery,) between his favourite figure and the back-ground of her original circumstances; and he likes her the better, inasmuch as, like himself, she owes all to her own merit—and *his* notice!

Possibly, the best cure for this false modesty, and for the uneasiness and extravagances it occasions, would be, for the retired and abstracted student to consider that he properly belongs to another sphere of action, remote from the scenes of ordinary life, and may plead the excuse of ignorance, and the privilege granted to strangers and to those who do not speak the same language. If any one is travelling in a foreign Diligence, he is not expected to shine nor to put himself forward, nor need he be out of countenance because he cannot: he has only to conform as well as he can to his new and temporary situation, and to study common propriety and simplicity of manners. Every thing has its own limits, a little centre of its own, round which it moves; so that our true wisdom lies in keeping to our own walk in life, however humble or obscure, and being satisfied if we can succeed in it. The best of us can do no more, and we shall only become ridiculous or unhappy by attempting it. We are ashamed, because we are at a loss in things to which we have no pretensions, and try to remedy our mistakes by committing greater. An overweening vanity or self-opinion is, in truth, often at the bottom of this weakness; and we shall be most likely to conquer the one by eradicating the other, or restricting it within due and moderate bounds.

THE MAIN-CHANCE.

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*February*, 1828.

> 'Search then the ruling passion: there alone,
> The wild are constant, and the cunning known;
> The fool consistent, and the false sincere;
> Priests, princes, women, no dissemblers here.
> This clue once found unravels all the rest,
> The prospect clears, and Wharton stands confest.'
>
> Pope.

I am one of those who do not think that mankind are exactly governed by reason or a cool calculation of consequences. I rather believe that habit, imagination, sense, passion, prejudice, words make a strong and frequent diversion from the right line of prudence and wisdom. I have been told, however, that these are merely the irregularities and exceptions, and that reason forms the rule or basis; that the understanding, instead of being the sport of the capricious and arbitrary decisions of the will, generally dictates the line of conduct it is to pursue, and that self-interest, or the *main-chance*, is the unvarying load-star of our affections, or the chief ingredient in all our motives, that, thrown in as ballast, gives steadiness and direction to our voyage through life. I will not take upon me to give a verdict in this cause as judge; but I will try to plead one side of it as an advocate, perhaps a biassed and feeble one.

As the passions are said to be subject to the control of reason, and as reason is resolved (in the present case) into an attention to our own interest, or a practical sense of the value of money, it will not be amiss to inquire how much of this principle itself is founded in a rational estimate of things, or is calculated for the end it proposes, or how much of it will turn out (when analysed) to be mere madness and folly or a mixture, like all the rest, of obstinacy, whim, fancy, vanity, ill-nature, and so forth, or a nominal pursuit of good. This passion, or an inordinate love of wealth, shows itself, when it is strong, equally in two opposite ways, in saving or in spending—in avarice (or stinginess) and in extravagance. To examine each of their order. That lowest and most familiar form of covetousness, commonly called *stinginess*, is at present (it must be owned) greatly on the wane in civilised society; it has been driven out of fashion either by ridicule and good sense, or by the spread of luxury, or by supplying the mind with other sources of interest, besides those which related to the bare means of subsistence, so that it may almost be considered as a vice, or absurdity, struck off the list, as a set-off to some that, in the change of manners and the progress of dissipation have been brought upon the stage. It is not, however, so entirely banished from the world, but that examples of it may be found to our purpose. It seems to have taken refuge in the petty provincial towns, or in old baronial castles in the North of Scotland, where it is still triumphant. To go into this subject somewhat in detail, as a study of the surviving manners of the last age.—Nothing is more common in these half-starved, barren regions, than to stint the servants in their wages, to allowance them in the merest necessaries, never to indulge them with a morsel of savoury food, and to lock up every thing from them as if they were thieves, or common vagabonds, broke into the house. The natural consequence is, that the mistresses live in continual *hot water* with their servants, keep watch and ward over them—the pantry is in a state of siege—grudge them every mouthful, every appearance of comfort, or moment of leisure, and torment their own souls every minute of their lives about what, if left wholly to itself, would not make a difference of five shillings at the year's end. There are families so notorious for this kind of *surveillance* and meanness, that no servant will go to live with them; for, to clench the matter, they are obliged to stay if they do; as, under these amiable establishments, and to provide against an evasion of their signal advantages, domestics are never hired but by the half-year. Instances have been known where servants have taken a pleasant revenge on their masters and mistresses without intending it; but where the example of sordid saving and meanness set to them, having taken possession of those even who were victims to it, they have conscientiously applied it to the benefit of all parties, and scarcely suffered a thing to enter the house for the whole six months they stayed in it. To pass over, however, those cases which may plead poverty as their excuse, what shall we say to a lady of fortune (the sister of one of their old-fashioned lairds) allowing the fruit to rot in the gardens and hot-houses of a fine old mansion in large quantities, sooner than let any of it be given away in presents to the neighbours; and, when peremptorily ordered by the master of the house to send a basket-full every morning to a sick friend, purchasing a small pottle for the purpose, and satisfying her mind (an intelligent and well-informed one) with this miserable subterfuge? Nay, farther, the same person, whenever they had green-peas, or other rarities, served up at table, could hardly be prevailed on to help the guests to them, but, if possible, sent them away, though no other use could now be made of them, and she would never see them again! Is there common sense in this; or is it not more like madness? But is it not, at the same time, human nature? Let us stop to explain a little. In my view, the real motive of action in this and other similar cases of grasping penuriousness has no more reference to self-love (properly so called) than artificial fruit and flowers have to natural ones. A certain form or outside appearance of utility may deceive the mind, but the natural, pulpy, wholesome, nutritious substance, the principle of vitality is gone. To this callous, frigid habit of mind, the real uses of things harden and crystallise; the pith and marrow are extracted out of them, and leave nothing but the husk or shell. By a regular process, the idea of property is gradually abstracted from the advantage it may be of even to ourselves; and to a well-drilled, thorough-bred, Northern housekeeper (such as I have supposed), the fruits, or other produce of her garden, would come at last to be things no more to be eaten or enjoyed, than her jewels or trinkets of any description, which are, professedly, of no use but to be *kept* as symbols of wealth, to be occasionally looked at, and carefully guarded from the approach of any unhallowed touch. The calculation of consequences, or of benefit to accrue to any living person, is so far from being the mainspring in this mechanical operation that it is never once thought of, or regarded with peevishness and impatience as an unwelcome intruder, because it must naturally divert the mind from the warped and false bias it has taken. The feeling of property is here, then, removed from the sphere of practice to a chimerical and fictitious one. In the case of not sending the fruit out of the house, there might be some lurking idea of its being possibly wanted at home, that it might be sent to some one else, or made up into conserves: but when different articles of food are actually placed on the table, to hang back from using or offering them to others, is a deliberate infatuation. They *must be* destroyed, they *could not* appear again; and yet this person's heart failed her, and shrank back from the only opportunity of making the proper use of them with a petty, sensitive apprehension, as if it were a kind of sacrilege done to a cherished and favourite object. The impulse to save was become, by indulgence, a sort of desperate propensity and forlorn hope, no longer the understood means, but the mistaken end: habit had completely superseded the exercise and control of reason, and the rage of making the most of every thing *by making no use of it at all*, resisted to the last moment the shocking project of feasting on a helpless dish of green-peas (that *would* fetch so much in the market) as an outrage against the Goddess of stinginess, and torture to the soul of thrift! The principle of economy is inverted; and in order to avoid the possibility of wasting any thing, the way with such philosophers and housewives is to abstain from touching it altogether. Is not this a common error?

Or are we conscious of our motives in such cases? [Or do we not flatter ourselves by imputing every such act of idle folly to the necessity of adopting some sure and judicious plan to shun ruin, beggary, and the most profligate abuse of wealth? An old maid in the same northern school of humanity calling upon some young ladies, her neighbours, was so alarmed and scandalized at finding the *safe* open in their absence, that she engaged herself to drink tea the same afternoon, for the express purpose of reading them a lecture on the unheard-of imprudence and impropriety of such an example, and was mobbed on her way home by the poor servant-girl (who had been made the subject of her declamation) in return for her uncalled-for interference. *She* had nothing to fear, nothing to lose: *her* safe was carefully locked up. Why then all this flutter, fidgetty anxiety, and itch of meddling? Out of pure romantic generosity—because the idea of any thing like comfort or liberality to a servant shocked her economical and screwed-up prejudices as much as the impugning any article of her religious or moral creed could have done. The very truisms and literal refinements of this passion are then sheer impertinence. The housekeeper came into the parlour of a '*big ha' house*,' in the same land of cakes and hospitality, to say that the workmen had refused to eat their dinner.—'Why so?'—Because there was nothing but sowins and sour milk.—'Then they must go without a dinner,' said the young mistress delighted; 'there is nothing else in the house for them.' Yet the larder at that time groaned with cold rounds of beef, hams, pasties, and the other plentiful remains of a huge entertainment the day before. This was flippancy and ill-nature, as well as a wrong notion of self-interest. Is it at all wonderful that a decent servant-girl, when applied to to go to this place, laughed at the idea of a service where there was nothing to eat? Yet this attention to the *main-chance* on her part, had it come to the lady's knowledge, would have been treated as a great piece of insolence. So little conception have such people of their own obligations on the claims of others! The clergyman of the parish (prolific in this sort of anecdote), a hearty, good sort of man enough, but irritable withal, took it into his head to fly into a violent passion if ever he found the glasses or spoons left out in the kitchen, and he always went into the kitchen to look after this sort of excitement. He pretended to be mightily afraid that the one would be broken (to his irreparable loss) and the other stolen, though there was no danger of either: he wanted an excuse to fret and fume about something. On the death of his wife he sent for her most intimate friend to condole and consult with, and having made some necessary arrangements, begged as a peculiar favour that she would look into the kitchen to see if the glasses and silver spoons were in their places. She repressed a smile at such a moment out of regard to his feelings, which were serious and acute; but burst into a fit of unrestrained laughter as soon as she got home. So ridiculous a thing is human nature, even to ourselves! Either our actions are absurd, or we are absurd in our constant censure and exposure of others. I would not from choice go into these details, but I might be required to fill up a vague outline; and the examples of folly, spite, and meanness are unfortunately 'sown like a thick scurf o'er life!']

Let us turn the tables and look at the other side of this sober, solid, ingrossing passion for property and its appendages. A man lays out a thousand, nay, sometimes many thousand pounds in purchasing a fine picture. This is thought, by the vulgar, a very fantastical folly, and unaccountable waste of money. Why so? No one would give such a sum for a picture, unless there were others ready to offer nearly the same sum, and who are likely to appreciate its value, and envy him the distinction. It is then a sign of taste, a proof of wealth to possess it, it is an ornament and a luxury. If the same person lays out the same sum of money in building or purchasing a fine house, or enriching it with costly furniture, no notice is taken—this is supposed to be perfectly natural and in order. Yet both are equally gratuitous pieces of extravagance, and the value of the objects is, in either case, equally *ideal.* It will be asked, 'But what is the use of the picture?' And what, pray, is the use of the fine house or costly furniture, unless to be looked at, to be admired, and to display the taste and magnificence of the owner? Are not pictures and statues as much furniture as gold plate or jasper tables; or does the circumstance of the former having a meaning in them, and appealing to the imagination as well as to the senses, neutralize their virtue, and render it entirely chimerical and visionary? It is true, every one must have a house of some kind, furnished somehow, and the superfluity so far grows imperceptibly out of the necessary. But a fine house, fine furniture, is necessary to no man, nor of more value than the plainest, except as a matter of taste, of fancy, of luxury and ostentation. Again, no doubt, if a person is in the habit of keeping a number of servants, and entertaining a succession of fashionable guests, he must have more room than he wants for himself, apartments suitably decorated to receive them, and offices and stables for their horses and retinue. But is all this unavoidably dictated as a consequence of his attention to the *main-chance*, or is it not sacrificing the latter, and making it a stalking-horse to his vanity, dissipation, or love of society and hospitality? We are at least as fond of spending money as of making it. If a man runs through a fortune in the way here spoken of, is it out of love to himself? Yet who scruples to run through a fortune in this way, or accuses himself of any extraordinary disinterestedness or love of others? One bed is as much as any one can sleep in, one room is as much as he can dine in, and he may have another for study or to retire to after dinner—but he can only want more than this for the accommodation of his friends, or the admiration of strangers. At Fonthill Abbey (to take an extreme illustration), there was not a single room fit to sit, lie, or stand in: the whole was cut up into pigeon holes, or spread out into long endless galleries. The building this huge, ill-assorted pile cost, I believe, nearly a million of money; and if the circumstance was mentioned, it occasioned an expression of surprise at the amount of the wealth that had been thus squandered—but if it was said that a hundred pounds had been laid out on a highly-finished picture, there was the same astonishment expressed at its misdirection. The sympathetic auditor makes up his mind to the first and greatest loss, by reflecting that in case of the worst the building materials alone will fetch something considerable; or, in the very idea of stone walls and mortar there is something solid and tangible, that repels the charge of frivolous levity or fine sentiment. This quaint excrescence in architecture, preposterous and ill-contrived as it was, occasioned, I suspect, many a heart-ache and bitter comparison to the throng of fashionable visitants; and I conceive it was the very want of comfort and convenience that enhanced this feeling, by magnifying, as it were from contrast, the expense that had been incurred in realising an idle whim. When we judge thus perversely and invidiously of the employment of wealth by others, I cannot think that we are guided in our own choice of means to ends by a simple calculation of downright use and personal accommodation. The gentleman who purchased Fonthill, and was supposed to be possessed of wealth enough to purchase half a dozen more Fonthills, lived there himself for some time in a state of the greatest retirement, rose at six and read till four, rode out for an hour for the benefit of the air, and dined abstemiously for the sake of his health. I could do all this myself. What then became of the rest of his fortune? It was lying in the funds, or embarked in business to make it yet greater, that he might still rise at six and read till four, &c.—it was of no other earthly use to him; for he did not wish to make a figure in the world, or to throw it away on studs of horses, on equipages, entertainments, gaming, electioneering, subscriptions to charitable institutions, [mistresses,] or any of the usual fashionable modes of squandering wealth for the amusement and wonder of others and our own fancied enjoyment. Mr. F. did not probably lay out five hundred a-year on himself: it cost Mr. Beckford, who led a life of perfect seclusion, twenty thousand a-year to defray the expenses of his table and of his household establishment. When I find that such and so various are the tastes of men, I am a little puzzled to know what is meant by self-interest, of which some persons talk so fluently, as if it was a *Jack-in-a-Box* which they could take out and show you, and which they tell you is the object that all men equally aim at. If money, is it for its own sake or the sake of other things? Is it to hoard it or to spend it, on ourselves or others? In all these points, we find the utmost diversity and contradiction both of feeling and practice. Certainly, he who puts his money into a strong-box, and he who puts it into a dice-box must be allowed to have a very different idea of the *main-chance*. If by this phrase be understood a principle of self-preservation, I grant that while we live, we must not starve, and that *necessity has no law*. Beyond this point, all seems nearly left to chance or whim; and so far are all the world from being agreed in their definition of this redoubtable term, that one half of them may be said to think and act in diametrical opposition to the other.

Avarice is the miser's dream, as fame is the poet's. A calculation of physical profit or loss is almost as much out of the question in the one case as in the other. The one has set his mind on gold, the other on praise, as the *summum bonum* or object of his bigoted idolatry and darling contemplation, not for any private and sinister ends. It is the immediate pursuit, not the remote or reflex consequence that gives wings to the passion. There is, indeed, a reference to self in either case that fixes and concentrates it, but not a gross or sordid one. Is not the desire to accumulate and leave a vast estate behind us equally romantic with the desire to leave a posthumous name behind us? Is not the desire of distinction, of something to be known and remembered by, the paramount consideration? And are not the privations we undergo, the sacrifices and exertions we make for either object, nearly akin? A child makes a huge snow-ball to show his skill and perseverance and as something to wonder at, not that he can swallow it as an ice, or warm his hands at it, and though the next day's sun will dissolve it; and the man accumulates a pile of wealth for the same reason principally, or to find employment for his time, his imagination, and his will. I deny that it can be of any other use to him to watch and superintend the returns of millions, than to watch the returns of the heavenly bodies, or to calculate their distances, or to contemplate eternity, or infinity, or the sea, or the dome of St. Peter's, or any other object that excites curiosity and interest from its magnitude and importance. Do we not look at the most barren mountain with thrilling awe and wonder? And is it strange that we should gaze at a mountain of gold with satisfaction, when we can besides say, 'This is ours, with all the power that belongs to it?' Every passion, however plodding and prosaic, has its poetical side to it. A miser is the true alchemist, or, like the magician in his cell, who overlooks a mighty experiment, who sees dazzling visions, and who wields the will of others at his nod; but to whom all other hopes and pleasures are dead, and who is cut off from all connexion with his kind. He lives in a splendid hallucination, a waking trance, and so far it is well: but if he thinks he has any other need or use for all this endless store (any more than to swill the ocean) he deceives himself, and is no conjuror after all. He goes on, however, mechanically adding to his stock, and fancying that great riches is great gain, that every particle that swells the heap is something in reserve against the evil day, and a defence against that poverty which he dreads more, the farther he is removed from it; as the more giddy the height to which we have attained, the more frightful does the gulph yawn below—so easily does habit get the mastery of reason, and so nearly is passion allied to madness! 'But he is laying up for his heirs and successors.' In toiling for them, and sacrificing himself, is he properly attending to the *main-chance*?

This is the turn the love of money takes in cautious, dry, recluse, and speculative minds. If it were the pure and abstract love of money, it could take no other turn but this. But in a different class of characters, the sociable, the vain, and imaginative, it takes just the contrary one, *viz.* to expense, extravagance, and ostentation. It then loves to display itself in every fantastic shape and with every reflected lustre, in houses, in equipage, in dress, in a retinue of friends and dependants, in horses, in hounds—to glitter in the eye of fashion, to be echoed by the roar of folly, and buoyed up for a while like a bubble on the surface of vanity, to sink all at once and irrecoverably into an abyss of ruin and bankruptcy. Does it foresee this result? Does it care for it? What then becomes of the calculating principle that can neither be hood-winked nor bribed from its duty? Does it do nothing for us in this critical emergency? It is blind, deaf, and insensible to all but the noise, confusion, and glare of objects by which it is fascinated and lulled into a fatal repose! One man ruins himself by the vanity of associating with lords, another by his love of low company, one by his fondness for building, another by his rage for keeping open house and private theatricals, one by philosophical experiments, another by embarking in every ticklish and fantastic speculation that is proposed to him, one throws away an estate on a law-suit, another on a die, a third on a horse-race, a fourth on *virtù*, a fifth on a drab, a sixth on a contested election, &c. There is no dearth of instances to fill the page, or complete the group of profound calculators and inflexible martyrs to the *main-chance.* Let any of these discreet and well-advised persons have the veil torn from their darling follies by experience, and be gifted with a double share of wisdom and a second fortune to dispose of, and each of them, so far from being warned by experience or disaster, will only be the more resolutely bent to assert the independence of his choice, and throw it away the self-same road it went before, on his vanity in associating with lords, on his love of low company, on his fondness for building, on his rage for keeping open house or private theatricals, on philosophical experiments, on fantastic speculations, on a law-suit, on a dice-box, on a favourite horse, on a picture, on a mistress, or election contest, and so on, through the whole of the chapter of accidents and cross-purposes. There is an admirable description of this sort of infatuation with folly and ruin in Madame D'Arblay's account of Harrel in 'Cecilia;' and though the picture is highly wrought and carried to the utmost length, yet I maintain that the principle is common. I myself have known more than one individual in the same predicament; and therefore cannot think that the deviations from the line of strict prudence and wisdom are so rare or trifling as the theory I am opposing represents them, or I must have been singularly unfortunate in my acquaintance. Out of a score of persons of this class I could mention several that have ruined their fortunes out of mere freak, others that are in a state of dotage and imbecility for fear of being robbed of all they are worth. The rest care nothing about the matter. So that this boasted and unfailing attention to the *main-chance* resolves itself, when strong, into mad profusion or griping penury, or if weak, is null and yields to other motives. Such is the conclusion, to which my observation of life has led me: if I am quite wrong, it is hard that in a world abounding in such characters I should not have met with a single practical philosopher.[1]

A girl in a country-town resolves never to marry any one under a duke or a lord. Good. This may be very well as an ebullition of spleen or vanity; but is there much common sense or regard to her own satisfaction in it? Were there any likelihood of her succeeding in her resolution, she would not make it: for it is the very distinction to be attained that piques her ambition, and leads her to gratify her conceit of herself by affecting to look down on any lower matches. Let her suffer ever so much mortification or chagrin in the prosecution of her scheme, it only confirms her the more in it: the spirit of contradiction, and the shame of owning herself defeated, increase with every new disappointment and year of painful probation. At least this is the case while there is any chance left. But what, after all, is this haughty and ridiculous pretension founded on? Is it owing to a more commanding view and a firmer grasp of consequences, or of her own interest? No such thing: she is as much captivated by the fancied sound of 'my lady,' and dazzled by the image of a coronet-coach, as the girl who marries a footman is smit with his broad shoulders, laced coat, and rosy cheeks. 'But why must I be always in extremes? Few misses make vows of celibacy or marry their footmen.' Take then the broad question:—Do they generally marry from the convictions of the understanding, or make the choice that is most likely to ensure their future happiness, or that they themselves approve afterwards? I think the answer must be in the negative; and yet love and marriage are among the weightiest and most serious concerns of life. Mutual regard, good temper, good sense, good character, or a conformity of tastes and dispositions, have notoriously and lamentably little to say in it. On the contrary, it is most frequently those things that pique and provoke opposition, instead of those which promise concord and sympathy, that decide the choice and inflame the will by the love of conquest or of overcoming difficulty. Or it is a complexion, or a fine set of teeth, or air, or dress, or a fine person, or false calves, or affected consequence, or a reputation for gallantry, or a flow of spirits, or a flow of words, or forward coquetry, or assumed indifference, something that appeals to the senses, the fancy, or to our pride, and determines us to throw away our happiness for life. Neither in this case, on which so much depends, are the *main-chance* and our real interest by any means the same thing.

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[1] Mr. Bentham proposes to new-model the penal code, on the principle of a cool and systematic calculation of consequences. Yet of all philosophers, the candidates for Panopticons and Penitentiaries are the most short-sighted and refractory. Punishment has scarcely any effect upon them. Thieves steal under the scaffold; and if a person's previous feelings and habits do not prevent his running the risk of the gallows, assuredly the fear of consequences, or his having already escaped it, with all the good resolutions he may have made on the occasion, will not prevent his exposing himself to it a second time. It is true, most

people have a natural aversion to being hanged. The perseverance of culprits in their evil courses seems a fatality, which is strengthened by the prospect of wha is to follow. Mr. Bentham argues that all 'men act from calculation, even madmen reason.' So far it may be true that the world is not unlike a great Bedlam or answers to the title of an old play—'A Mad World, my masters!' This is ou world, but not his. Life, on looking back to it, too often resembles a disturbe dream, which does not infer its having been guided by reason in its progress.

'Now all ye ladies of fair Scotland,
And ladies of England that happy would prove,
Marry never for houses, nor marry for land,
Nor marry for nothing but only love.'[1]—*Old Ballad.*

Or take the passion of love where it has other objects and consequences in view. Is reason any match for the poison of this passion, where it has been once imbibed? I might just as well be told that reason is a cure for madness or the bite of a venomous serpent. Are not health, fortune, friends, character, peace of mind, every thing sacrificed to its idlest impulse? Are the instances rare, or are they not common and tragical? The *main-chance* does not serve the turn here. Does the prospect of certain ruin break the fascination to its frail victim, or does it not rather enhance and precipitate the result? Or does it not render the conquest more easy and secure that the seducer has already triumphed over and deserted a hundred other victims? A man *à bonnes fortunes* is the most irresistible personage in the lists of gallantry. Take drunkenness again, that vice which till within these few years (and even still) was fatal to the health, the constitution, the fortunes of so many individuals, and the peace of so many families in Great Britain. I would ask what remonstrance of friends, what lessons of experience, what resolutions of amendment, what certainty of remorse and suffering, however exquisite, would deter the confirmed sot (where the passion for this kind of excitement had once become habitual and the immediate want of it was felt) from indulging his propensity and taking his full swing, notwithstanding the severe and imminent punishment to follow upon his incorrigible excess? The consequence of not abstaining from his favourite beverage is not doubtful and distant (a thing in the clouds) but close at his side, staring him in the face, and felt perhaps in all its aggravations the very morning, yet the recollection of this and of the next day's dawn is of no avail against the momentary craving and headlong impulse given by the first application of the glass to his lips. The present temptation is indeed heightened by the threatened alternative. I know this as a rule, that the stronger the repentance, the surer the relapse and the more hopeless the cure! The being ingrossed by the present moment, by the present feeling, whatever it be, whether of pleasure or pain, is the evident cause of both. Few instances have been heard of, of a final reformation on this head. Yet it is a clear case; and reason, if it were that Giant that it is represented in any thing but ledgers and books of accounts, would put down the abuse in an instant. It is true, this infirmity is more particularly chargeable to the English and to other Northern nations, and there has been a considerable improvement among us of late years; but I suspect it is owing to a change of manners, and to the opening of new sources of amusement (without the aid of ardent spirits flung in to relieve the depression of our animal spirits,) more than to the excellent treatises which have been written against the 'Use of Fermented Liquors,' or to an increasing, tender regard to our own comfort, health, and happiness in the breast of individuals. We still find plenty of ways of tormenting ourselves and sporting with the feelings of others! I will say nothing of a passion for gaming here, as too obvious an illustration of what I mean. It is more rare, and hardly to be looked on as epidemic with us. But few that have dabbled in this vice have not become deeply involved, and few (or none) that have done so have ever retraced their steps or returned to sober calculations of the *main-chance*. The majority, it is true, are not gamesters; but where the passion does exist, it completely tyrannizes over and stifles the voice of common sense, reason, and humanity. How many victims has the point of honour! I will not pretend that, as matters stand, it may not be necessary to fight a duel, under certain circumstances and on certain provocations, even in a prudential point of view, (though this again proves how little the maxims and practices of the world are regulated by a mere consideration of personal safety and welfare)—but I do say that the rashness with which this responsibility is often incurred, and the even seeking for trifling causes of quarrel, shows any thing but a consistent regard to self-interest as a general principle of action, or rather betrays a total recklessness of consequences, when opposed to pique, petulance, or passion.

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[1] ['Have I not seen a household where love was not?' says the author of the 'Betrothed;' 'where, although there was worth and good will, and enough of the means of life, all was imbittered by regrets, which were not only vain, but criminal?'—'I would take the *Ghost's* word for a thousand pound,' or in preference to that of any man living, though I was told in the streets of Edinburgh, that Dr. Jamieson, the author of the 'Dictionary,' was quite as great a man!]

Before I proceed to answer a principal objection (and indeed a staggering one at first sight) I will mention here that I think it strongly confirms my view of human nature, that men form their opinions much more from prejudice than reason. The proof that they do so is that they form such opposite ones, when the abstract premises and independent evidence are the same. How few Calvinists become Lutherans! How few Papists Protestants! How few Tories Whigs![1] Each shuts his eyes equally to facts or arguments, and persists in the view of the subject that custom, pride, and obstinacy dictate. Interest is no more regarded than reason; for it is often at the risk both of life and fortune that these opinions have been maintained, and it is uniformly when parties have run highest and the strife has been deadliest that people have been most forward to stake their existence and every thing belonging to them, on some unintelligible dogma or article of an old-fashioned creed. Half the wars and fightings, martyrdoms, persecutions, feuds, antipathies, heart-burnings in the world have been about some distinction, 'some trick not worth an egg'—so ready are mankind to sacrifice their all to a mere name! It may be urged, that the good of our souls or our welfare in a future state of being is a rational and well-grounded motive for these religious extravagances. And this is true, so far as religious zeal falls in with men's passions or the spirit of the times. A bigot was formerly ready to cut his neighbour's throat to go to Heaven, but not so ready to reform his own life, or give up a single vice or gratification for all the pains and penalties denounced upon it, and of which his faith in Holy Church did not suffer him to doubt a moment!

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[1] *Certes* more Whigs become Tories. This may also be accounted for satisfactorily, though not very rationally.

But it is contended here, that in matters not of doctrinal speculation but of private life and domestic policy, every one consults and understands his own interest; that whatever other *hobbies* he may have, he minds this as the main-object, and contrives to make both ends meet, in spite of seeming inattention and real difficulties. 'If we look around us' (says a shrewd, hard-headed Scotchman) 'and take examples from the neighbourhood in which we live, we shall find that allowing for occasional exceptions, diversities and singularities, the *main-chance* is still stuck to with rigid and unabated pertinacity—the accounts are wound up and every thing is right at the year's end, whatever freaks or fancies may have intervened in the course of it. The business of life goes on (which is the principal thing) and every man's house stands on its own bottom. This is the case in Nicholson-street, in the next street to it, and in the next street to that, and in the whole of Edinburgh, Scotland, and England to boot.' This, I allow, is a *home-thrust*, and I must parry it, how I can. It is a kind of heavy, broad-wheeled waggon of an objection that makes a formidable, awkward appearance, and takes up so much of the road, that I shall have a lucky escape if I can dash by it in my light travelling gig without being upset or crushed to atoms. The persons who in the present instance have the charge of it, in its progress through the streets of Edinburgh, are a constitutional lawyer, a political economist, an opposition editor, and an *ex-officio* surveyor of the Customs—fearful odds against one poor metaphysician! Their machine of human life, I confess, puts me a little in mind of those square-looking caravans one sometimes meets on the road in which they transport wild beasts from place to place; and dull, heavy, safe, and flat as they look, the inmates continue their old habits, the monkeys play their tricks, and the panthers lick their jaws for human blood, though cramped and confined in their excursions. So the vices and follies, when they cannot break loose, do their worst *inside* this formal conveyance, the *main-chance*. As this ovation is to pass up High-street, for the honour of the Scottish capital, I should wish it to stop at the shop-door of Mr. Bartholine Saddletree, to see if he is at home or in the courts. Also, to inquire whether the suit of Peter Peebles is yet ended; and to take the opinion of counsel, how many of the Highland lairds or Scottish noblemen and gentlemen that were *out* in the fifteen and the forty-five, perilled their lives and fortunes in the good cause from an eye to the *main-chance*? The Baron of Bradwardine would have scorned such a suggestion; nay, it would have been below Balmawhapple or even Killancureit. But 'the age of chivalry is gone, and that of sophists, economists, and calculators has succeeded.' I should say that the risk, the secrecy, the possibility of the leaders having their heads stuck on Temple-Bar, and their estates confiscated, were among the foremost causes that inflamed their zeal and stirred their blood to the enterprise. Hardship, danger, exile, death,—these words 'smack of honour,' more than the *main-chance*. The modern Scotch may be loyal on this thriving principle: their ancestors found *their* loyalty a very losing concern. Yet they persevered in it till and long after it became a desperate cause. But patriotism and loyalty (true or false) are important and powerful principles in human affairs, though not always selfish and calculating. Honour is one great standard-bearer and puissant leader in the struggle of human life; and less than honour (a nickname or a bugbear) is enough to set the multitude together by the ears, whether in civil, religious, or private brawls. [But to return to our Edinburgh shop-keepers, those practical models of wisdom, and authentic epitomes of human nature. Say that by their 'canny ways and pawky looks' they keep their names out of the 'Gazette,' yet still care (not the less perhaps) mounts behind their counters, and sits in their back-shops. A tradesman is not a bankrupt at the year's end. But what does it signify, if he is hen-pecked in the mean time, or quarrels with his wife, or beats his apprentices, or has married a woman twice as old as himself for her money, or has been jilted by his maid, or fuddles himself every night, or is laying in an apoplexy by over-eating himself, or is believed by nobody, or is a furious Whig or Tory, or a knave, or a fool, or one envious of the success of his neighbours, or dissatisfied with his own, or surly, or eaten up with indolence and procrastination, never easy but bashful and awkward in company (though with a vast desire to shine) or has some personal defect or weak side on which the Devil is sure to assail him, and the venting his spleen and irritability on which, through some loop-hole or other, makes the real business and torment of his life—that of his shop may go on as it pleases. Such is the perfection of reason and the triumph of the sovereign good, where there are no strong passions to disturb, or no great vices to sully it! The humours collect, the will will have head, the petty passions ferment, and we start some grievance or other, and hunt it down every hour in the day, or the machine of *still-life* could not go on even in North Britain. But were I to grant the full force and extent of the objection, I should still say that it does not bear upon my view of the subject or general assertion, that reason is an unequal match for passion. Business is a kind of gaoler or task-master, that keeps its vassals in good order while they are under its eye, as the slave or culprit performs his task with the whip hanging over him, and punishment immediately to follow neglect; but the question is, what he would do with his recovered freedom, or what course the mind will for the most part pursue, when in the range of its general conduct it has its choice to make between a distant, doubtful, sober, rational good (or *average* state of being), and some one object of comparatively little value, that strikes the senses, flatters our pride, gives scope to the imagination, and has all the strength of passion and inclination on its side. The *main-chance* then is a considerable exception, but not a fair one or a case in point, since it falls under a different head and line of argument.] The fault of reason in general, (which takes in the *whole* instead of *parts*,) is that objects, though of the utmost extent and importance, are not defined and tangible. This fault cannot be found with the pursuit of trade and commerce. It is not a mere dry, abstract, undefined, speculative, however steady and well-founded conviction of the understanding. It has other levers and pulleys to enforce it, besides those of reason and reflection. As follows:—

1. The value of money is positive or specific. The interest in it is a sort of mathematical interest, reducible to number and quantity. Ten is always more than one; a part is never greater than the whole; the good we seek or attain in this way has a technical denomination, and I do not deny that in matters of strict calculation, the principle of calculation will naturally bear great sway. The returns of profit and loss are regular and mechanical, and the operations of business, or the *main-chance*, are so too. But, commonly speaking, we judge by the *degree* of excitement, not by the ultimate quantity. Thus we

prefer a draught of nectar to the recovery of our health, [and are on most occasions ready to exclaim,—

'An ounce of sweet is worth a pound of sour.']

Yet there is a point at which self-will and humour stop. A man will take brandy, which is a *kind of slow poison*, but he will not take *actual* poison, knowing it to be such, however slow the operation or bewitching the taste; because here the effect is absolutely fixed and certain, not variable, nor in the power of the imagination to elude or trifle with it. I see no courage in battle, but in going on what is called the *forlorn hope.*

2. Business is also an affair of habit: it calls for incessant and daily application; and what was at first a matter of necessity to supply our wants, becomes often a matter of necessity to employ our time. The man of business wants work for his head; the labourer and mechanic for his hands; so that the love of action, of difficulty and competition, the stimulus of success or failure, is perhaps as strong an ingredient in men's ordinary pursuits as the love of gain. We find persons pursuing science, or any *hobby-horsical* whim or handicraft that they have taken a fancy to, or persevering in a losing concern, with just the same ardour and obstinacy. As to the choice of a pursuit in life, a man may not be forward to engage in business, but being once in, does not like to turn back amidst the pity of friends and the derision of enemies. How difficult is it to prevent those who have a turn for any art or science from going into these unprofitable pursuits! Nay, how difficult is it often to prevent those who have no turn that way, but prefer starving to a certain income! If there is one in a family brighter than the rest, he is immediately designed for one of the learned professions. Really, the dull and plodding people of the world have not much reason to boast of their superior wisdom or numbers: they are in an involuntary majority!

3. The value of money is an *exchangeable* value: that is, this pursuit is available towards and convertible into a great many others. A person is in want of money, and mortgages an estate, to throw it away upon a round of entertainments and company. The passion or motive here is not a hankering after money, but society, and the individual will ruin himself for this object. Another, who has the same passion for show and a certain style of living, tries to gain a fortune in trade to indulge it, and only goes to work in a more round-about way. I remember a story of a common mechanic at Manchester, who laid out the hard-earned savings of the week in hiring a horse and livery-servant to ride behind him to Stockport every Sunday, and to dine there at an ordinary like a gentleman. The

pains bestowed upon the *main-chance* here was only a cover for another object, which exercised a ridiculous predominance over his mind. Money will purchase a horse, a house, a picture, leisure, dissipation, or whatever the individual has a fancy for that is to be purchased; but it does not follow that he is fond of all these, or of whatever will promote his real interest, because he is fond of money, but that he has a passion for some one of these objects, to which he would probably sacrifice all the rest, and his own peace and happiness into the bargain.

4. The *main-chance* is an instrument of various passions, but is directly opposed to none of them, with the single exception of indolence or the *vis inertiæ*, which of itself is seldom strong enough to master it, without the aid of some other incitement. A barrister sticks to his duty as long as he has only his love of ease to prevent; but he flings up his briefs, or neglects them, if he thinks he can make a figure in Parliament. [A servant-girl stays in her place and does her work, though perhaps lazy and slatternly, because no immediate temptation occurs strong enough to interfere with the necessity of gaining her bread, but she goes away with a bastard-child, because here passion and desire come into play, though the consequence is that she loses not only her place, but her character and every prospect in life.] No one flings away the *main-chance* without a motive, any more than he voluntarily walks into the fire or breaks his neck out of window. A man must live; the first step is a point of necessity: every man would live well; the second is a point of luxury. The having, or even acquiring wealth does not prevent our enjoying it in various ways. A man may give his mornings to business, and his evenings to pleasure. There is no contradiction; nor does he sacrifice his ruling passion by this, any more than the man of letters by study, or the soldier by an attention to discipline. Reason and passion are opposed, not passion and business. The sot, the glutton, the debauchee, the gamester, must all have money, to make their own use of it, and they may indulge all these passions and their avarice at the same time. It is only when the last becomes the ruling passion that it puts a prohibition on the others. In that case, every thing else is lost sight of; but it is seldom carried to this length, or when it is, it is far from being another name, either in its means or ends, for reason, sense, or happiness, as I have already shown.

I have taken no notice hitherto of ambition or virtue, or scarcely of the pursuits of fame or intellect. Yet all these are important and respectable divisions of the map of human life. Who ever charged Mr. Pitt with a want of common sense, because he did not die worth a plum? Had it been proposed to Lord Byron to forfeit every penny of his estate, or every particle of his reputation, would he have hesitated to part with the former? Is there not a loss of character, a stain upon honour, that is felt as a severer blow than any reverse of fortune? Do not the richest heiresses in the city marry for a title, and think themselves well off? Are there not patriots who think or dream all their lives about their country's good; philanthropists who rave about liberty and humanity at a certain yearly loss? Are there not studious men, who never once thought of bettering their circumstances? Are not the liberal professions held more respectable than business, though less lucrative? Might not most people do better than they do, but that they postpone their interest to their indolence, their taste for reading, their love of pleasure, or other pursuits? And is it not generally understood that all men can make a fortune or succeed in the *main-chance*, who have but that one idea in their heads?[1] Lastly, are there not those who pursue or husband wealth for their own good, for the benefit of their friends or the relief of the distressed? But as the examples are rare, and might be supposed to make against myself, I shall not insist upon them. I think I have said enough to vindicate or apologize for my first position—

> 'Masterless passion sways us to the mood
> Of what it likes or loaths—'

or if not to make good my ground, to march out with flying colours and beat of drum!

SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*October and December*, 1828.

A. For my part, I think Helvetius has made it clear that self-love is at the bottom of all our actions, even of those which are apparently the most generous and disinterested.

B. I do not know what you mean by saying that Helvetius has made this clear, nor what you mean by self-love.

A. Why, was not he the first who explained to the world that in gratifying others, we gratify ourselves; that though the result may be different, the motive is really the same, and a selfish one; and that if we had not more pleasure in performing what are called friendly or virtuous actions than the contrary, they would never enter our thoughts?

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[1] I have said somewhere, that all professions that do not make money *breed* are careless and extravagant. This is not true of lawyers, &c. I ought to have said that this is the case with all those that by the regularity of their returns do not afford a prospect of realizing an independence by frugality and industry.

B. Certainly he is no more entitled to this discovery (if it be one) than you are. Hobbes and Mandeville long before him asserted the same thing in the most explicit and unequivocal manner; [1] and Butler, in the Notes and Preface to his Sermons, had also long before answered it in the most satisfactory way.

A. Ay, indeed! pray how so?

B. By giving the *common-sense* answer to the question which I have just asked of you.

A. And what is that? I do not exactly comprehend.

B. Why, that self-love means, both in common and philosophical speech, the love *of* self.

A. To be sure, *there needs no ghost to tell us that.*

B. And yet, simple as it is, both you and many great philosophers seem to have overlooked it.

A. You are pleased to be obscure—unriddle for the sake of the vulgar.

B. Well then, Bishop Butler's statement in the volume I have mentioned——

A. May I ask, is it the author of the *Analogy* you speak of?

B. The same, but an entirely different and much more valuable work. His position is, that the arguments of the opposite party go to prove that in all our motives and actions it is the individual indeed who loves or is interested in *something*, but not in the smallest degree (which yet seems necessary to make out the full import of the compound 'sound significant,' *self-love*) that that something is *himself*. By self-love is surely implied not only that it is I who feel a certain passion, desire, good-will, and so forth, but that I feel this good-will towards myself—in other words, that I am both the person feeling the attachment, and the object of it. In short, the controversy between self-love and benevolence relates not to the person who loves, but to the person beloved—otherwise, it is flat and puerile nonsense. There must always be some one to feel the love, that's certain, or else there could be no love of one thing or another—so far there can be no question that it is a given individual who feels, thinks, and acts in all possible cases of feeling, thinking, and acting —'there needs,' according to your own allusion, 'no ghost come from the grave to tell us that'—but whether the said individual in so doing always thinks *of*, feels *for*, and acts *with a view to himself*, that is a very important question, and the only real one at issue; and the very statement of which, in a distinct and intelligible form, gives at once the proper and inevitable answer to it. Self-love, to mean any thing, must have a double meaning, that is, must not merely signify love, but love defined and directed in a particular manner, having *self* for its object, reflecting and reacting upon *self*; but it is downright and intolerable trifling to persist that the love or concern which we feel for another still has self for its object, because it is we who feel it. The same sort of quibbling would lead to the conclusion that when I am thinking of any other person, I am notwithstanding thinking of myself, because it *I* who have his image in my mind.

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[1] 'Il a manqué au plus grand philosophe qu'aient eu les Francais, de vivre dans quelque solitude des Alpes, dans quelque séjour éloigné, et de lancer delà son livre dans Paris sans y venir jamais lui-même. Rousseau avait trop de sensibilité et trop peu de raison, Buffon trop d'hypocrisie à son jardin des plantes, Voltaire trop d'enfantillage dans la tête, pour pouvoir juger le principe d'Helvétius.'—*De l'Amour*, tom. 2. p. 230.

My friend Mr. Beyle here lays too much stress on a borrowed verbal fallacy.

A. I cannot, I confess, see the connection.

B. I wish you would point out the distinction. Or let me ask you—Suppose you were to observe me looking frequently and earnestly at myself in the glass, would you not be inclined to laugh, and say that this was vanity?

A. I might be half-tempted to do so.

B. Well; and if you were to find me admiring a fine picture, or speaking in terms of high praise of the person or qualities of another, would you not set it down equally to an excess of coxcombry and self-conceit?

A. How, in the name of common sense, should I do so?

B. Nay, how should you do otherwise upon your own principles? For if sympathy with another is to be construed into self-love because it is I who feel it, surely, by the same rule, my admiration and praise of another must be resolved into self-praise and self-admiration, and I am the whole time delighted with myself, to wit, with my own thoughts and feelings, while I pretend to be delighted with another. Another's limbs are as much mine, who contemplate them, as his feelings.

A. Now, my good friend, you go too far: I can't think you serious.

B. Do I not tell you that I have a most grave Bishop (equal to a whole Bench) on my side?

A. What! is this illustration of the looking-glass and picture his? I thought it was in your own far-fetched manner.

B. And why far-fetched?

A. Because nobody can think of calling the praise of another self-conceit—the words have a different meaning in the language.

B. Nobody has thought of confounding them hitherto, and yet they sound to me as like as selfishness and generosity. If our vanity can be brought to admire others disinterestedly, I do not see but our good-nature may be taught to serve them as disinterestedly. Grant me but this, that self-love signifies not simply, 'I love,' but requires to have this further addition, 'I love *myself*,' understood in order to make sense or grammar of it, and I defy you to make one or the other of Helvetius's theory, if you will needs have it to be his. If, as Fielding says, all our passions are selfish merely because they are *ours*, then in hating another we must be said to hate ourselves, just as wisely as in loving another, we are said to be actuated by self-love. I have no patience with such foolery. I respect that fine old sturdy fellow Hobbes, or even the acute pertinacious sophistry of Mandeville; but I do not like the flimsy, self-satisfied repetition of an absurdity, which with its originality has lost all its piquancy.

A. You have, I know, very little patience with others who differ from you, nor are you a very literal reporter of the arguments of those who happen to be on your side of the question. You were about to tell me the substance of Butler's answer to Helvetius's theory, if we can let the anachronism pass; and I have as yet only heard certain quaint and verbal distinctions of your own. I must still think that the most disinterested actions proceed from a selfish motive. A man feels distress at the sight of a beggar, and he parts with his money to remove this uneasiness. If he did not feel this distress in his own mind, he would take no steps to relieve the other's wants.

B. And pray, does he feel this distress in his own mind out of love to himself, or solely that he may have the pleasure of getting rid of it? The first *move* in the game of mutual obligation is evidently a social, not a selfish impulse, and I might rest the dispute here and insist upon going no farther till this step is got over, but it is not necessary. I have already told you the substance of Butler's answer to this common-place and plausible objection. He says, in his fine broad manly and yet unpretending mode of stating a question, that a living being may be supposed to be actuated either by mere sensations, having no reference to any one else, or else that having an idea and foresight of the consequences to others, he is influenced by and interested in those consequences only in so far as they have a distinct connexion with his own ultimate good, in both which cases, seeing that the motives and actions have both their origin and end in self, they may and must be properly denominated *selfish*. But where the motive is neither physically nor morally selfish, that is, where the impulse to act is neither excited by a physical sensation nor by a reflection on the consequence to accrue to the individual, it must be hard to say in what sense it can be called so, except in that sense already exploded, namely, that which would infer that an impulse of any kind is selfish merely because it acts upon some one, or that before we can entertain disinterested sympathy with another, we must feel no sympathy at all. Benevolence, generosity, compassion, friendship, &c. imply, says the Bishop, that we take an immediate and unfeigned interest in the welfare of others; that their pleasures give us pleasure; that their pains give us pain, barely to know of them, and from no thought about ourselves. But no! retort the advocates of self-love, this is not enough: before any person can pretend to the title of benevolent, generous, and so on, he must prove, that so far from taking the deepest and most heartfelt interest in the happiness of others, he has no feeling on the subject, that he is perfectly indifferent to their weal or woe; and then taking infinite pains and making unaccountable sacrifices for their good without caring one farthing about them, he might pass for heroic and disinterested. But if he lets it appear he has the smallest good-will towards them and acts upon it, he then becomes a merely selfish agent; so that to establish a character for generosity, compassion, humanity, &c. in any of his actions, he must first plainly prove that he never felt the slightest twinge of any of these passions thrilling in his bosom. This, according to my author, is requiring men to act not from charitable motives, but from no motives at all. Such reasoning has not an appearance of philosophy, but rather of drivelling weakness or of tacit irony. For my part, I can conceive of no higher strain of generosity than that which justly and truly says, *Nihil humani â me alienum puto*—but, according to your modern French friends and my old English ones, there is no difference between this and the most sordid selfishness; for the instant a man takes an interest in another's welfare, he makes it his own, and all the merit and disinterestedness is gone. 'Greater love than this hath no man, that he should give his life for his friend.' It must be rather a fanciful sort of self-love that at any time sacrifices its own acknowledged and obvious interests for the sake of another.

A. Not in the least. The expression you have just used explains the whole mystery, and I think you must allow this yourself. The moment I sympathise with another, I do in strictness make his interest my own. The two things on this supposition become inseparable, and my gratification is identified with his advantage. Every one, in short, consults his particular taste and inclination, whatever may be its bias, or acts from the strongest motive. Regulus, as Helvetius has so ably demonstrated, would not have returned to Carthage, but that the idea of dishonour gave him more uneasiness than the apprehension of a violent death.

B. That is, had he not preferred the honour of his country to his own interest. Surely, when self-love by all accounts takes so very wide a range and embraces entirely new objects of a character so utterly opposed to its general circumscribed and paltry routine of action, it would be as well to designate it by some new and appropriate appellation, unless it were meant, by the intervention of the old and ambiguous term, to confound the important practical distinction which subsists between the puny circle of a man's physical sensations and private interests and the whole world of virtue and honour, and thus to bring back the last gradually and disingenuously within the verge of the former. Things without names are unapt to take root in the human mind: we are prone to reduce nature to the dimensions of language. If a feeling of a refined and romantic character is expressed by a gross and vulgar name, our habitual associations will be sure to degrade the first to the level of the last, instead of conforming to a forced and technical definition. But I beg to deny, not only that the objects in this case are the same, but that the principle is similar.

A. Do you then seriously pretend that the end of sympathy is not to get rid of the momentary uneasiness occasioned by the distress of another?

B. And has that uneasiness, I again ask, its source in self-love? If self-love were the only principle of action, we ought to receive no uneasiness from the pains of others, we ought to be wholly exempt from any such weakness: or the least that can be required to give the smallest shadow of excuse to this exclusive theory is, that the instant the pain was communicated by our foolish, indiscreet sympathy, we should think of nothing but getting rid of it as fast as possible, by fair means or foul, as a mechanical instinct. If the pain of sympathy, as soon as it arose, was decompounded from the objects which gave it birth, and acted upon the brain or nerves solely as a detached, desultory feeling, or abstracted sense of uneasiness, from which the mind shrunk with its natural aversion to pain, then I would allow that the impulse in this case, having no reference to the good of another, and seeking only to remove a present inconvenience from the individual, would still be properly self-love: but no such process of abstraction takes place. The feeling of compassion, as it first enters the mind, so it continues to act upon it in conjunction with the idea of what another suffers; refers every wish it forms or every effort it makes, to the removal of pain from a fellow-creature, and is only satisfied when it believes this end to be accomplished. It is not a blind, physical repugnance to pain, as affecting ourselves, but rational or intelligible conception of it as existing out of ourselves, that prompts and sustains our exertions in behalf of humanity. Nor can it be otherwise, while man is the creature of imagination and reason, and has faculties that implicate him (whether he will or not) in the pleasures and pains of others, and bind up his fate with theirs. Why, then, when an action or feeling is neither in its commencement nor progress, nor ultimate objects, dictated by or subject to the control of self-love, bestow the name where every thing but the name is wanting?

A. I must give you fair warning, that in this last *tirade* you have more than once gone beyond my comprehension. Your distinctions are too fine-drawn, and there is a want of relief in the expression. Are you not getting back to what you describe as your *first manner*? Your present style is more amusing. See if you cannot throw a few high lights into that last argument!

B. *Un peu plus à l'Anglaise*—any thing to oblige! I say, then, it appears to me strange that self-love should be asserted by any impartial reasoner, (not the dupe of a play upon words), to be absolute and undisputed master of the human mind, when compassion or uneasiness on account of others enters it without leave and in spite of this principle. What! to be instantly expelled by it without mercy, so that it may still assert its pre-eminence? No; but to linger there, to hold consultation with another principle, Imagination, which owes no allegiance to self-interest, and to march out only under condition and guarantee that the welfare of another is first provided for without any special clause in its own favour. This is much as if you were to say and swear, that though the bailiff and his man have taken possession of your house, you are still the rightful owner of it.

A. And so I am.

B. Why, then, not turn out such unwelcome intruders without standing upon ceremony?

A. You were too vague and abstracted before: now you are growing too figurative. Always in extremes.

B. Give me leave for a moment, as you will not let me spin mere metaphysical cobwebs.

A. I am patient.

B. Suppose that by sudden transformation your body were so contrived that it could feel the actual sensations of another body, as if your nerves had an immediate and physical communication; that you were assailed by a number of objects you saw and knew nothing of before, and felt desires and appetites springing up in your bosom for which you could not at all account—would you not say that this addition of another body made a material alteration in your former situation; that it called for a new set of precautions and instincts to provide for its wants and wishes? or would you persist in it that you were just where you were, that no change had taken place in your being and interests, and that your new body was in fact your old one, for no other reason than because it was yours? To my thinking, the case would be quite altered by the supererogation of such a new sympathetic body, and I should be for dividing my care and time pretty equally between them.

Captain C. You mean that in that case you would have taken in partners to the concern, as well as No. I.?

B. Yes; and my concern for No. II. would be something very distinct from, and quite independent of, my original and hitherto exclusive concern for No. I.

A. How very gross and vulgar! (whispering to D——,and then turning to me, added,)—but why suppose an impossibility? I hate all such incongruous and far-fetched illustrations.

B. And yet this very miracle takes place every day in the human mind and heart, and you and your sophists would persuade us that it is nothing, and would slur over its existence by a shallow misnomer. Do I not by imaginary sympathy acquire a new interest (out of myself) in others as much as I should on the former supposition by physical contact or animal magnetism? and am I not compelled by this new law of my nature (neither included in physical sensation nor a deliberate regard to my own individual welfare) to consult the feelings and wishes of the new social body of which I am become a member, often to the prejudice of my own? The parallel seems to me exact, and I think the inference from it unavoidable. I do not postpone a benevolent or friendly purpose to my own personal convenience, or make it bend to it—

> 'Letting *I should not* wait upon *I would,*
> Like the poor cat in the adage.'

The will is amenable not to our immediate sensibility but to reason and imagination, which point out and enforce a line of duty very different from that prescribed by self-love. The operation of sympathy or social feeling, though it has its seat certainly in the mind of the individual, is neither for his immediate behalf nor to his remote benefit, but is constantly a diversion from both, and therefore, I contend, is not in any sense selfish. The movements in my breast as much originate in, and are regulated by, the *idea* of what another feels, as if they were governed by a chord placed there vibrating to another's pain. If these movements were mechanical, they would be considered as directed to the good of another: it is odd, that because my bosom takes part and beats in unison with them, they should become of a less generous character. In the passions of hatred, resentment, sullenness, or even in low spirits, we voluntarily go through a great deal of pain, because *such is our pleasure*; or strictly, because certain objects have taken hold of our imagination, and we cannot, or will not, get rid of the impression: why should good-nature and generosity be the only feelings in which we will not allow a little forgetfulness of ourselves? Once more. If self-love, or each individual's sensibility, sympathy, what you will, were like an animalcule, sensitive, quick, shrinking instantly from whatever gave it pain, seeking instinctively whatever gave it pleasure, and having no other obligation or law of its existence, then I should be most ready to acknowledge that this principle was in its nature, end, and origin, selfish, slippery, treacherous, inert, inoperative but as an instrument of some immediate stimulus, incapable of generous sacrifice or painful exertion, and deserving a name and title accordingly, leading one to bestow upon it its proper attributes. But the very reverse of all this happens. The mind is tenacious of remote purposes, indifferent to immediate feelings, which cannot consist with the nature of a rational and voluntary agent. Instead of the animalcule swimming in pleasure and gliding from pain, the principle of self-love is incessantly to the imagination or sense of duty what the fly is to the spider—that fixes its stings into it, involves it in its web, sucks its blood, and preys upon its vitals! Does the spider do all this to please the fly? Just as much as Regulus returned to Carthage and was rolled down a hill in a barrel with iron spikes in it to please himself! The imagination or understanding is no less the enemy of our pleasure than of our interest. It will not let us be at ease till we have accomplished certain objects with which we have ourselves no concern but as melancholy truths.

A. But the spider you have so quaintly conjured up is a different animal from the fly. The imagination on which you lay so much stress is a part of one's-self.

B. I grant it: and for that very reason, self-love, or a principle tending exclusively to our own immediate gratification or future advantage, neither is nor can be the sole spring of action in the human mind.

A. I cannot see that at all.

D. Nay, I think he has made it out better than usual.

B. Imagination is another name for an interest in things out of ourselves, which must naturally run counter to our own. Self-love, for so fine and smooth-spoken a gentleman, leads his friends into odd scrapes. The situation of Regulus in a barrel with iron-spikes in it was not a very easy one: but, say the advocates of refined self-love, their points were a succession of agreeable punctures in his sides, compared with the stings of dishonour. But what bound him to this dreadful alternative? Not self-love. When the pursuit of honour becomes troublesome, 'throw honour to the dogs—I'll none of it!' This seems the true Epicurean solution. Philosophical self-love seems neither a voluptuary nor an effeminate coward, but a cynic, and even a martyr, so that I am afraid he will hardly dare show his face at Very's, and that, with this knowledge of his character, even the countenance of the Count de Stutt-Tracy will not procure his admission to the saloons.

A. The Count de Stutt-Tracy, did you say? Who is he? I never heard of him.

B. He is the author of the celebrated 'Idéologie,' which Bonaparte denounced to the Chamber of Peers as the cause of his disasters in Russia. He is equally hated by the Bourbons; and what is more extraordinary still, he is patronised by Ferdinand VII. who settled a pension of two hundred crowns a year on the translator of his works. He speaks of Condillac as having '*created* the science of Ideology,' and holds Helvetius for a true philosopher.

A. Which you do not! I think it a pity you should affect singularity of opinion in such matters, when you have all the most sensible and best-informed judges against you.

B. I am sorry for it too; but I am afraid I can hardly expect you with me, till I have all Europe on my side, of which I see no chance while the Englishman with his notions of solid beef and pudding holds fast by his substantial identity, and the Frenchman with his lighter food and air mistakes every shadowy impulse for himself.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*December*, 1828.

D. You deny, I think, that personal identity, in the qualified way in which you think proper to admit it, is any ground for the doctrine of self-interest?

B. Yes, in an exclusive and absolute sense I do undoubtedly, that is, in the sense in which it is affirmed by metaphysicians, and ordinarily believed in.

D. Could you not go over the ground briefly, without entering into technicalities?

B. Not easily: but stop me when I entangle myself in difficulties. A person fancies, or feels habitually, that he has a positive, substantial interest in his own welfare, (generally speaking) just as much as he has in any actual sensation that he feels, because he is always and necessarily the same self. What is his interest at one time is therefore equally *his* interest at all other times. This is taken for granted as a self-evident proposition. Say he does not feel a particular benefit or injury at this present moment, yet it is he who is to feel it, which comes to the same thing. Where there is this continued identity of person, there must also be a correspondent identity of interest. I have an abstract, unavoidable interest in whatever can befall myself, which I can have or feel in no other person living, because I am always under every possible circumstance the self-same individual, and not any other individual whatsoever. In short, this word *self* (so closely do a number of associations cling round it and cement it together) is supposed to represent as it were a given concrete substance, as much one thing as any thing in nature can possibly be, and the centre or *substratum* in which the different impressions and ramifications of my being meet and are indissolubly knit together.

A. And you propose then seriously to take 'this one entire and perfect chrysolite,' this self, this 'precious jewel of the soul,' this rock on which mankind have built their faith for ages, and at one blow shatter it to pieces with the sledge-hammer, or displace it from its hold in the imagination with the wrenching-irons of metaphysics?

B. I am willing to use my best endeavours for that purpose.

D. You really ought: for you have the prejudices of the whole world against you.

B. I grant the prejudices are formidable; and I should despair, did I not think the reasons even stronger. Besides, without altering the opinions of the whole world, I might be contented with the suffrages of one or two intelligent people.

D. Nay, you will prevail by flattery, if not by argument.

A. That is something newer than all the rest.

B. 'Plain truth,' dear A——, 'needs no flowers of speech.'

D. Let me rightly understand you. Do you mean to say that I am not C. D. and that you are not W. B. or that we shall not both of us remain so to the end of the chapter, without a possibility of ever changing places with each other?

B. I am afraid, if you go to that, there is very little chance that

'*I* shall be ever mistaken for *you*.'

But with all this precise individuality and inviolable identity that you speak of, let me ask, Are you not a little changed (less so, it is true, than most people) from what you were twenty years ago? Or do you expect to appear the same that you are now twenty years hence?

D. 'No more of that if thou lovest me.' We know what we are, but we know not what we shall be.

B. A truce then; but be assured that whenever you happen to fling up your part, there will be no other person found to attempt it after you.

D. Pray, favour us with your paradox without farther preface.

B. I will then try to match my paradox against your prejudice, which as it is armed all in proof, to make any impression on it, I must, I suppose, take aim at the rivets; and if I can hit them, if I do not (round and smooth as it is) cut it into three pieces, and show that two parts in three are substance and the third and principal part shadow, never believe me again. Your real self ends exactly where your pretended self-interest begins; and in calculating upon this principle as a solid, permanent, absolute, self-evident truth, you are mocked with a name.

D. How so? I hear, but do not see.

B. You must allow that this identical, indivisible, ostensible self is at any rate distinguishable into three parts,—the past, the present, and future?

D. I see no particular harm in that.

B. It is nearly all I ask. Well then, I admit that you have a peculiar, emphatic, incommunicable and exclusive interest or fellow-feeling in the two first of these selves; but I deny resolutely and unequivocally that you have any such natural, absolute, unavoidable, and mechanical interest in the last self, or in your future being, the interest you take in it being necessarily the offspring of understanding and imagination (aided by habit and circumstances), like that which you take in the welfare of others, and yet this last interest is the only one that is ever the object of rational and voluntary pursuit, or that ever comes into competition with the interests of others.

D. I am still to seek for the connecting clue.

B. I am almost ashamed to ask for your attention to a statement so very plain that it seems to border on a truism. I have an interest of a peculiar and limited nature in my present self, inasmuch as I feel my actual sensations not simply in a degree, but in a way and by means of faculties which afford me not the smallest intimation of the sensations of others. I cannot possibly feel the sensations of any one else, nor consequently take the slightest interest in them as such. I have no nerves communicating with another's brain, and transmitting to me either the glow of pleasure or the agony of pain which he may feel at the present moment by means of his senses. So far, therefore, namely, so far as my present self or immediate sensations are concerned, I am cut off from all sympathy with others. I stand alone in the world, a perfectly insulated individual, necessarily and in the most unqualified sense indifferent to all that passes around me, and that does not in the first instance affect myself, for otherwise I neither have nor can have the remotest consciousness of it as a matter of organic sensation, any more than the mole has of light or the deaf adder of sounds.

D. Spoken like an oracle.

B. Again, I have a similar peculiar, mechanical, and untransferable interest in my past self, because I remember and can dwell upon my past sensations (even after the objects are removed) also in a way and by means of faculties which do not give me the smallest insight into or sympathy with the past feelings of others. I may conjecture and fancy what those feelings have been; and so I do. But I have no *memory* or continued consciousness of what either of good or evil may have found a place in their bosoms, no secret spring that touched vibrates to the hopes and wishes that are no more, unlocks the chambers of the past with the same assurance of reality, or identifies my feelings with theirs in the same intimate manner as with those which I have already felt in my own person. Here again, then, there is a real, undoubted, original and positive foundation for the notion of self to rest upon; for in relation to my former self and past feelings, I do possess a faculty which serves to unite me more especially to my own being, and at the same time draws a distinct and impassable line around that being, separating it from every other. A door of communication stands always open between my present consciousness and my past feelings, which is locked and barred by the hand of Nature and the constitution of the human understanding against the intrusion of any straggling impressions from the minds of others. I can only see into their real history darkly and by reflection. To sympathise with their joys or sorrows, and place myself in their situation either now or formerly, I must proceed by guess-work, and borrow the use of the common faculty of imagination. I am ready to acknowledge, then, that in what regards the past as well as the present, there is a strict metaphysical distinction between myself and others, and that my personal identity so far, or in the close, continued, inseparable connection between my past and present impressions, is firmly and irrevocably established.

D. You go on swimmingly. So far all is sufficiently clear.

B. But now comes the rub: for beyond that point I deny that the doctrine of personal identity or self-interest (as a consequence from it) has any foundation to rest upon but a confusion of names and ideas. It has none in the nature of things or of the human mind. For I have no faculty by which I can project myself into the future, or hold the same sort of palpable, tangible, immediate, and exclusive communication with my future feelings, in the same manner as I am made to feel the present moment by means of the senses, or the past moment by means of memory. If I have any such faculty, expressly set apart for the purpose, name it. If I have no such faculty, I can have no such interest. In order that I may possess a proper personal identity so as to live, breathe, and feel along the whole line of my existence in the same intense and intimate mode, it is absolutely necessary to have some general medium or faculty by which my successive impressions are blended and amalgamated together, and to maintain and support this extraordinary interest. But so far from there being any foundation for this merging and incorporating of my future in my present self, there is no link of connection, no sympathy, no reaction, no mutual consciousness between them, nor even a possibility of any thing of the kind, in a mechanical and personal sense. Up to the present point, the spot on which we stand, the doctrine of personal identity holds good; hitherto the proud and exclusive pretensions of self 'come, but no farther.' The rest is air, is nothing, is a name, or but the common ground of reason and humanity. If I wish to pass beyond this point and look into my own future lot, or anticipate my future weal or woe before it has had an existence, I can do so by means of the same faculties by which I enter into and identify myself with the welfare, the being, and interests of others, but only by these. As I have already said, I have no particular organ or faculty of self-interest, in that case made and provided. I have no sensation of what is to happen to myself in future, no presentiment of it, no instinctive sympathy with it, nor consequently any abstract and unavoidable self-interest in it. Now mark. It is only in regard to my past and present being, that a broad and insurmountable barrier is placed between myself and others: as to future objects, there is no absolute and fundamental distinction whatever. But it is only these last that are the objects of any rational or practical interest. The idea of self properly attaches to objects of sense or memory, but these can never be the objects of action or of voluntary pursuit, which must, by the supposition, have an eye to future events. But with respect to these the chain of self-interest is dissolved and falls in pieces by the very necessity of our nature, and our obligations to self as a blind, mechanical, unsociable principle are lost in the general law which binds us to the pursuit of good as it comes within our reach and knowledge.

A. A most lame and impotent conclusion, I must say. Do you mean to affirm that you have really the same interest in another's welfare that you have in your own?

B. I do not wish to assert any thing without proof. Will you tell me if you have this particular interest in yourself what faculty is it that gives it you—to what conjuration and what mighty magic it is owing—or whether it is merely the name of self that is to be considered as a proof of all the absurdities and impossibilities that can be drawn from it?

A. I do not see that you have hitherto pointed out any.

B. What! not the impossibility that you should be another being, with whom you have not a particle of fellow-feeling?

A. Another being! Yes, I know it is always impossible for me to be another being.

B. Ay, or yourself either, without such a fellow-feeling, for it is that which constitutes self. If not, explain to me what you mean by self. But it is more convenient for you to let that magical sound lie involved in the obscurity of prejudice and language. You will please to take notice that it is not I who commence these hairbreadth distinctions and special-pleading. I take the old ground of common sense and natural feeling, and maintain that though in a popular, practical sense mankind are strongly swayed by self-interest, yet in the same ordinary sense they are also governed by motives of good-nature, compassion, friendship, virtue, honour, &c. Now all this is denied by your modern metaphysicians, who would reduce every thing to abstract self-interest, and exclude every other mixed motive or social tie in a strict, philosophical sense. They would drive me from my ground by scholastic subtleties and newfangled phrases; am I to blame then if I take them at their word, and try to foil them at their own weapons? Either stick to the unpretending *jog-trot* notions on the subject, or if you are determined to refine in analysing words and arguments, do not be angry if I follow the example set me, or even go a little farther to arrive at the truth. Shall we proceed on this understanding?

A. As you please.

B. We have got so far then (if I mistake not, and if there is not some flaw in the argument which I am unable to detect) that the past and present (which alone can appeal to our selfish faculties) are not the objects of action, and that the future (which can alone be the object of practical pursuit) has no particular claim or hold upon self. All action, all passion, all morality and self-interest, is prospective.

A. You have not made that point quite clear. What then is meant by a present interest, by the gratification of the present moment, as opposed to a future one?

B. Nothing, in a strict sense; or rather in common speech, you mean a near one, the interest of the next moment, the next hour, the next day, the next year, as it happens.

A. What! would you have me believe that I snatch my hand out of the flame of a candle from a calculation of future consequences?

D. *(laughing.)* A. had better not meddle with that question. B. is in his element there. It is his old and favourite illustration.

B. Do you not snatch your hand out of the fire to procure ease from pain?

A. No doubt, I do.

B. And is not this case subsequent to the act, and the act itself to the feeling of pain, which caused it?

A. It may be so; but the interval is so slight that we are not sensible of it.

B. Nature is nicer in her distinctions than we. Thus you could not lift the food to your mouth, but upon the same principle. The viands are indeed tempting, but if it were the sight or smell of these alone that attracted you, you would remain satisfied with them. But you use means to ends, neither of which exist till you employ or produce them, and which would never exist if the understanding which foresees them did not run on before the actual objects and purvey to appetite. If you say it is habit, it is partly so; but that habit would never have been formed, were it not for the connection between cause and effect, which always takes place in the order of time, or of what Hume calls *antecedents* and *consequents*.

A. I confess I think this a mighty microscopic way of looking at the subject.

B. Yet you object equally to more vague and sweeping generalities. Let me, however, endeavour to draw the knot a little tighter, as it has a considerable weight to bear—no less, in my opinion, than the whole world of moral sentiments. All voluntary action must relate to the future: but the future can only exist or influence the mind as an object of imagination and forethought; therefore the motive to voluntary action, to all that we seek or shun, must be in all cases *ideal* and problematical. The thing itself which is an object of pursuit can never co-exist with the motives which make it an object of pursuit. No one will say that the past can be an object either of prevention or pursuit. It may be a subject of involuntary regrets, or may give rise to the starts and flaws of passion; but we cannot set about seriously recalling or altering it. Neither can that which at present exists, or is an object of sensation, be at the same time an object of action or of volition, since if it *is*, no volition or exertion of mine can for the instant make it to be other than it is. I can make it *cease* to be indeed, but this relates to the future, to the supposed non-existence of the object, and not to its actual impression on me. For a thing to be *willed*, it must necessarily not be. Over my past and present impressions my will has no control: they are placed, according to the poet, beyond the reach of fate, much more of human means. In order that I may take an effectual and consistent interest in any thing, that it may be an object of hope or fear, of desire or dread, it must be a thing still to come, a thing still in doubt, depending on circumstances and the means used to bring about or avert it. It is my will that determines its existence or the contrary (otherwise there would be no use in troubling oneself about it); it does not itself lay its peremptory, inexorable mandates on my will. For it is as yet (and must be in order to be the rational object of a moment's deliberation) a non-entity, a possibility merely and it is plain that nothing can be the cause of nothing. That which is not, cannot act, much less can it act mechanically, physically, all-powerfully. So far is it from being true that a real and practical interest in any thing are convertible terms, that a practical interest can never by any possible chance be a real one, that is, excited by the presence of a real object or by mechanical sympathy. I cannot assuredly be induced by a present object to take means to make it exist—it can be no more than present to me—or if it is past, it is too late to think of recovering the occasion or preventing it now. But the future, the future is all our own; or rather it belongs equally to others. The world of action then, of business or pleasure, of self-love or benevolence, is not made up of solid materials, moved by downright, solid springs; it is essentially a void, an unreal mockery, both in regard to ourselves and others, except as it is filled up, animated, and set in motion by human thoughts aud purposes. The ingredients of passion, action, and properly of interest are never positive, palpable matters-of-fact, concrete existences, but symbolical representations of events lodged in the bosom of futurity, and teaching us, by timely anticipation and watchful zeal, to build up the fabric of our own or others' future weal.

A. Do we not sometimes plot their woe with at least equal good-will?

B. Not much oftener than we are accessory to our own.

A. I must say that savours more to me of an antithesis than of an answer.

B. For once, be it so.

A. But surely there is a difference between a real and an imaginary interest? A history is not a romance.

B. Yes; but in this sense the feelings and interests of others are in the end as real, as much matters of fact as mine or yours can be. The history of the world is not a romance, though you and I have had only a small share in it. You would turn every thing into autobiography. The interests of others are no more chimerical, visionary, fantastic than my own, being founded in truth, and both are brought home to my bosom in the same way by the force of imagination and sympathy.

D. But in addition to all this sympathy that you make such a rout about, it is *I* who am to feel a real, downright interest in my own future good, and I shall feel no such interest in another person's. Does not this make a wide, nay a total difference in the case? Am I to have no more affection for my own flesh and blood than for another's?

B. This would indeed make an entire difference in the case, if your interest in your own good were founded in your affection for yourself, and not your affection for yourself in your attachment to your own good. If you were attached to your own good merely because it was *yours*, I do not see why you should not be equally attached to your own ill—both are equally yours! Your own person or that of others would, I take it, be alike indifferent to you, but for the degree of sympathy you have with the feelings of either. Take away the sense or apprehension of pleasure and pain, and you would care no more about yourself than you do about the hair of your head or the paring of your nails, the parting with which gives you no sensible uneasiness at the time or on after-reflection.

D. But up to the present moment you allow that I have a particular interest in my proper self. Where then am I to stop, or how draw the line between my real and my imaginary identity?

B. The line is drawn for you by the nature of things. Or if the difference between reality and imagination is so small that you cannot perceive it, it only shows the strength of the latter. Certain it is that we can no more anticipate our future being than we change places with another individual, except in an *ideal* and figurative sense. But it is just as impossible that I should have an actual sensation of and interest in my future feelings as that I should have an actual sensation of and interest in what another feels at the present instant. An essential and irreconcileable difference in our primary faculties forbids it. The future, were it the next moment, were it an object nearest and dearest to our hearts, is a dull blank, opaque, impervious to sense as an object close to the eye of the blind, did not the ray of reason and reflection enlighten it. We can never say to its fleeting, painted essence, 'Come, let me clutch thee!' it is a thing of air, a phantom that flies before us, and we follow it, and with respect to all but our past and present sensations, which are no longer any thing to action, we totter on the brink of nothing. That self which we project before us into it, that we make our proxy or representative, and empower to embody, and transmit back to us all our real, substantial interests before they have had an existence, except in our imaginations, is but a shadow of ourselves, a bundle of habits, passions, and prejudices, a body that falls in pieces at the touch of reason or the approach of inquiry. It is true, we do build up such an imaginary self, and a proportionable interest in it; we clothe it with the associations of the past and present, we disguise it in the drapery of language, we add to it the strength of passion and the warmth of affection, till we at length come to class our whole existence under one head, and fancy our future history a solid, permanent, and actual continuation of our immediate being, but all this only proves the force of imagination and habit to build up such a structure on a merely partial foundation, and does not alter the true nature and distinction of things. On the same foundation are built up nearly as high natural affection, friendship, the love of country, of religion, &c. But of this presently. What shows that the doctrine of self-interest, however high it may rear its head, or however impregnable it may seem to attack, is a mere 'contradiction,'

'In terms a fallacy, in fact a fiction,'

is this single consideration, that we never know what is to happen to us before-hand, no, not even for a moment, and that we cannot so much as tell whether we shall be alive a year, a month, or a day hence. We have no presentiment of what awaits us, making us feel the future in the instant. Indeed such an insight into futurity would be inconsistent with itself, or we must become mere passive instruments in the hands of fate. A house may fall on my head as I go from this, I may be crushed to pieces by a carriage running over me, or I may receive a piece of news that is death to my hopes before another four-and-twenty hours are passed over, and yet I feel nothing of the blow that is thus to stagger and stun me. I laugh and am well. I have no warning given me either of the course or the consequence (in truth if I had, I should, if posssible, avoid it). This continued self-interest that watches over all my concerns alike, past, present, and future, and concentrates them all in one powerful and invariable principle of action, is useless here, leaves me at a loss at my greatest need, is torpid, silent, dead, and I have no more consciousness of what so nearly affects me, and no more care about it, (till I find out my danger by other and natural means,) than if no such thing were ever to happen, or were to happen to the Man in the Moon.

'And coming events cast their shadows before.'

This beautiful line is not verified in the ordinary prose of life. That it is not, is a staggering consideration for your fine, practical, instinctive, abstracted, comprehensive, uniform principle of self-interest. Don't you think so, D——?

D. I shall not answer you. Am I to give up my existence for an idle sophism? You heap riddle upon riddle; but I am mystery-proof. I still feel my personal identity as I do the chair I sit on, though I am enveloped in a cloud of smoke and words. Let me have your answer to a plain question.—Suppose I were actually to see a coach coming along and I was in danger of being run over, what I want to know is, should I not try to save myself sooner than any other person?

B. No, you would first try to save a sister, if she were with you.

A. Surely that would be a very rare instance of self, though I do not deny it.

B. I do not think so. I believe there is hardly any one who does not prefer some one to themselves. For example, let us look into Waverley.

A. Ay, that is the way that you take your ideas of philosophy, from novels and romances, as if they were sound evidence.

B. If my conclusions are as true to nature as my premises, I shall be satisfied. Here is the passage I was going to quote: 'I was only ganging to say, my lord,' said Evan, in what he meant to be an insinuating manner, 'that if your excellent honour and the honourable court would let Vich Ian Vohr go free just this once and let him gae back to France and not trouble King George's government again, that any six o' the very best of his clan will be willing to be justified in his stead; and if you 'll just let me gae down to Glennaquoich, I 'll fetch them up to ye myself to head or hang, and you may begin with me the very first man.'[1]

A. But such instances as this are the effect of habit and strong prejudice. We can hardly argue from so barbarous a state of society.

B. Excuse me there. I contend that our preference of ourselves is just as much the effect of habit, and very frequently a more unaccountable and unreasonable one than any other.

A. I should like to hear how you can possibly make that out.

B. If you will not condemn me before you hear what I have to say, I will try. You allow that D——, in the case we have been talking of, would perhaps run a little risk for you or me; but if it were a perfect stranger, he would get out of the way as fast as his legs would carry him, and leave the stranger to shift for himself.

A. Yes; and does not that overturn your whole theory?

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[1] *Waverley*, vol. iii. p. 201.

B. It would if my theory were as devoid of common sense as you are pleased to suppose; that is, if because I deny an original and absolute distinction in nature (where there is no such thing,) it followed that I must deny that circumstances, intimacy, habit, knowledge, or a variety of incidental causes could have any influence on our affections and actions. My inference is just the contrary. For would you not say that D—— cared little about the stranger for this plain reason, that he knew nothing about him?

A. No doubt.

B. And he would care rather more about you and me, because he knows more about us?

A. Why yes, it would seem so.

B. And he would care still more about a sister, (according to the same supposition) because he would be still better acquainted with her, and had been more constantly with her?

A. I will not deny it.

B. And it is on the same principle (generally speaking) that a man cares most of all about himself, because he knows more about himself than about any body else, that he is more in the secret of his own most intimate thoughts and feelings, and more in the habit of providing for his own wants and wishes, which he can anticipate with greater liveliness and certainty than those of others, from being more nearly 'made and moulded of things past.' The poetical fiction is rendered easier and assisted by my acquaintance with myself, just as it is by the ties of kindred or habits of friendly intercourse. There is no farther approach made to the doctrines of self-love and personal identity.

D. E., here is B. trying to persuade me I am not myself.

E. Sometimes you are not.

D. But he says that I never am.—Or is it only that I am not to be so?

B. Nay, I hope 'thou art to continue, thou naughty varlet'—

> 'Here and hereafter, if the last may be!'

You have been yourself (nobody like you) for the last forty years of your life: you would not prematurely stuff the next twenty into the account, till you have had them fairly out?

D. Not for the world, I have too great an affection for them.

B. Yet I think you would have less if you did not look forward to pass them among old books, old friends, old haunts. If you were cut off from all these, you would be less anxious about what was left of yourself.

D. I would rather be the *Wandering Jew* than not be at all.

B. Or you would not be the person I always took you for.

D. Does not this willingness to be the Wandering Jew rather than nobody, seem to indicate that there is an abstract attachment to self, to the bare idea of existence, independently of circumstances or habit?

B. It must be a very loose and straggling one. You mix up some of your old recollections and favourite notions with your self elect, and indulge them in your new character, or you would trouble yourself very little about it. If you do not come in in some shape or other, it is merely saying that you would be sorry if the Wandering Jew were to disappear from the earth, however strictly he may have hitherto maintained his *incognito*.

D. There is something in that; and as well as I remember there is a curious but exceedingly mystical illustration of this point in an original Essay of yours which I have read and spoken to you about.

B. I believe there is; but A—— is tired of making objections, and I of answering them to no purpose.

D. I have the book in the closet, and if you like, we will turn to the place. It is after that burst of enthusiastic recollection (the only one in the book) that Southey said at the time was something between the manner of Milton's prose-works and Jeremy Taylor.

B. Ah! I as little thought then that I should ever be set down as a florid prose-writer as that he would become poet-laureat!

J. D. here took the volume from his brother, and read the following passage from it.

'I do not think I should illustrate the foregoing reasoning so well by any thing I could add on the subject, as by relating the manner in which it first struck me. There are moments in the life of a solitary thinker which are to him what the evening of some great victory is to the conqueror and hero—milder triumphs long remembered with truer and deeper delight. And though the shouts of multitudes do not hail his success—though gay trophies, though the sounds of music, the glittering of armour, and the neighing of steeds do not mingle with his joy, yet shall he not want monuments and witnesses of his glory—the deep forest, the willowy brook, the gathering clouds of winter, or the silent gloom of his own chamber, "faithful remembrancers of his high endeavour, and his glad success," that, as time passes by him with unreturning wing, still awaken the consciousness of a spirit patient, indefatigable in the search of truth, and the hope of surviving in the thoughts and minds of other men. I remember I had been reading a speech which Mirabaud (the author of the "System of Nature") has put into the mouth of a supposed Atheist at the last judgment; and was afterwards led on, by some means or other to consider the question, whether it could properly be said to be an act of virtue in any one to sacrifice his own final happiness to that of any other person or number of persons, if it were possible for the one ever to be made the price of the other? Suppose it were my own case—that it were in my power to save twenty other persons by voluntarily consenting to suffer for them: Why should I not do a generous thing, and never trouble myself about what might be the consequence to myself the Lord knows when?

'The reason why a man should prefer his own future welfare to that of others is, that he has a necessary, absolute interest in the one, which he cannot have in the other—and this, again, is a consequence of his being always the same individual, of his continued identity with himself. The difference, I thought, was this, that however insensible I may be to my own interest at any future period, yet when the time comes I shall feel differently about it. I shall then judge of it from the actual impression of the object, that is, truly and certainly; and as I shall still be conscious of my past feelings, and shall bitterly regret my own folly and insensibility, I ought, as a rational agent, to be determined now by what I shall then wish I had done, when I shall feel the consequences of my actions most deeply and sensibly. It is this continued consciousness of my own feelings which gives me an immediate interest in whatever relates to my future welfare, and makes me at all times accountable to myself for my own conduct. As, therefore, this consciousness will be renewed in me after death, if I exist again at all—But stop—as I must be conscious of my past feelings to be myself, and as this conscious being will be myself, how if that consciousness should be transferred to some other being? How am I to know that I am not imposed upon by a false claim of identity? But that is ridiculous, because you will have no other self than that which arises from this very consciousness. Why, then, this self may be multiplied in as many different beings as the Deity may think proper to endue with the same consciousness; which, if it can be renewed at will in any one instance, may clearly be so in a hundred others. Am I to regard all these as equally myself? Am I equally interested in the fate of all? Or if I must fix upon some one of them in particular as my representative and other self, how am I to be determined in my choice? Here, then, I saw an end put to my speculations about absolute self-interest and personal identity. I saw plainly that the consciousness of my own feelings, which is made the foundation of my continued interest in them, could not extend to what had never been, and might never be; that my identity with myself must be confined to the connection between my past and present being; that with respect to my future feelings or interests, they could have no communication with, or influence over, my present feelings and interests, merely because they were future; that I shall be hereafter affected by the recollection of my past feelings and actions; and my remorse be equally heightened by reflecting on my past folly and late-earned wisdom, whether I am really the same being, or have only the same consciousness renewed in me; but that to suppose that this remorse can re-act in the reverse order on my present feelings, or give me an immediate interest in my future feelings, before they exist, is an express contradiction in terms. It can only affect me as an imaginary idea, or an idea of truth. But so may the interests of others; and the question proposed was, whether I have not some real, necessary, absolute interest in whatever relates to my future being, in consequence of my immediate connection with myself—independently of the general impression which all positive ideas have on my mind. How, then, can this pretended unity of consciousness which is only reflected from the past—which makes me so little acquainted with the future that I cannot even tell for a moment how long it will be continued, whether it will be entirely interrupted by or renewed in me after death, and which might be multiplied in I don't know how many different beings, and prolonged by complicated sufferings, without my being any the wiser for it,—how, I say, can a principle of this sort identify my present with my future interests, and make me as much a participator in what does not at all affect me as if it were actually impressed on my senses? It is plain, as this conscious being may be decompounded, entirely destroyed, renewed again, or multiplied in a great number of beings, and as, whichever of these takes place, it cannot produce the least alteration in my present being—that what I am does not depend on what I am to be, and that there is no communication between my future interests, and the motives by which my present conduct must be governed. This can no more be influenced by what may be my future feelings with respect to it, than it will then be possible for me to alter my past conduct by wishing that I had acted differently. I cannot, therefore, have a principle of active self-interest arising out of the immediate connection between my present and future self, for no such connection exists, or is possible. I am what I am in spite of the future. My feelings, actions, and interests, must be determined by causes already existing and acting, and are absolutely independent of the future. Where there is not an intercommunity of feelings, there can be no identity of interests. My personal interest in any thing must refer either to the interest excited by the actual impression of the object, which cannot be felt before it exists, and can last no longer than while the impression lasts; or it may refer to the particular manner in which I am mechanically affected by the idea of my own impressions in the absence of the object. I can, therefore, have no proper personal interest in my future impressions, since neither my ideas of future objects, nor my feelings with respect to them, can be excited either directly or indirectly by the impressions themselves, or by any ideas or feelings accompanying them, without a complete transposition of the order in which causes and effects follow one another in nature. The only reason for my preferring my future interest to that of others, must arise from my anticipating it with greater warmth of present imagination. It is this greater liveliness and force with which I can enter into my future feelings, that in a manner identifies them with my present being; and this notion of identity being once formed, the mind makes use of it to strengthen its habitual propensity, by giving to personal motives a reality and absolute truth which they can never have. Hence it has been inferred that my real, substantial interest in any thing, must be derived in some indirect manner from the impression of the object itself, as if that could have any sort of communication with my present feelings, or excite any interest in my mind but by means of the imagination, which is naturally affected in a certain manner by the prospect of future good or evil.'

J. D. 'This is the strangest tale that e'er I heard,
C. D. 'It is the strangest fellow, brother John!'

THE FREE ADMISSION

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*July*, 1830.

A FREE Admission is the *lotos* of the mind: the leaf in which your name is inscribed as having the privileges of the *entrée* for the season is of an oblivious quality—an antidote for half the ills of life. I speak here not of a purchased but of a gift-ticket, an emanation of the generosity of the Managers, a token of conscious desert. With the first you can hardly bring yourself to go to the theatre; with the last, you cannot keep away. If you have paid five guineas for a free-admission for the season, this *free-admission* turns to a mere slavery You seem to have done a foolish thing, and to have committed an extravagance under the plea of economy. You are struck with remorse. You are impressed with a conviction that pleasure is not to be bought. You have paid for your privilege in the lump, and yo receive the benefit in driblets. The five pounds you are out of pocke does not meet with an adequate compensation the first night, or o any single occasion—you must come again, and use double diligenc to strike a balance to make up your large arrears; instead of an obvious saving, it hangs as a dead-weight on your satisfaction all the year; and the improvident price you have paid for them kills every ephemeral enjoyment, and poisons the flattering illusions of the scene. You have incurred a debt, and must go every night to redeem it; and as you do not like being tied to the oar, or making a toil of a pleasure, you stay away altogether; give up the promised luxury as a bad speculation; sit sullenly at home, or bend your loitering feet in any other direction; and putting up with the first loss, resolve never to be guilty of the like folly again. But it is not thus with the possessor of a Free Admission, truly so called. His is a pure pleasure, a clear gain. He feels none of these irksome qualms and misgivings. He marches to the theatre like a favoured lover; if he is compelled to absent himself, he feels all the impatience and compunction of a prisoner. The portal of the Temple of the Muses stands wide open to him, closing the vista of the day—when he turns his back upon it at night with steps gradual and slow, mingled with the common crowd, but conscious of a virtue which they have not, he says, 'I shall come again to-morrow!' In passing through the streets, he casts a sidelong, careless glance at the playbills: he reads the papers chiefly with a view to see what is the play for the following day, or the ensuing week. If it is something new, he is glad; if it is old, he is resigned—but he goes in either case. His steps bend mechanically that way—pleasure becomes a habit, and habit a duty—he fulfils his destiny—he walks deliberately along Long-acre (you may tell a man going to the play, and whether he pays or has a free admission)—quickens his pace as he turns the corner of Bow-street, and arrives breathless and in haste at the welcome spot, where on presenting himself, he receives a passport that is a release from care, thought, toil, for the evening, and wafts him into the regions of the blest! What is it to him how the world turns round if the play goes on; whether empires rise or fall, so that Covent-Garden stands its ground? Shall he plunge into the void of politics, that volcano burnt-out with the cold, sterile, sightless lava, hardening all around? or con over the registers of births, deaths, and marriages, when he may be present at Juliet's wedding, and gaze on Juliet's tomb? or shall he wonder at the throng of coaches in Regent-street, when he can feast his eyes with the coach (the fairy-vision of his childhood) in which Cinderella rides to the ball? Here (by the help of that *Open Sessame!* a Free Admission), ensconced in his favourite niche, looking from the 'loop-holes of retreat' in the second circle, he views the pageant of the world played before him; melts down years to moments; sees human life, like a gaudy shadow, glance across the stage; and here tastes of all earth's bliss, the sweet without the bitter, the honey without the sting, and plucks ambrosial fruits and amaranthine flowers (placed by the enchantress Fancy within his reach,) without having to pay a tax for it at the time, or repenting of it afterwards. 'He is all ear and eye, and drinks in sounds or sights that might create a soul under the ribs of death.' 'The fly,' says Gay, 'that sips treacle, is lost in the sweets': so he that has a free-admission forgets every thing else. Why not? It is the chief and enviable transfer of his being from the real to the unreal world, and the changing half his life into a dream. 'Oh! leave me to my repose,' in my beloved corner at Covent Garden Theatre! This (and not 'the arm-chair at an inn,' though that too, at other times, and under different circumstances, is not without its charms,) is to me 'the throne of felicity.' If I have business that would detain me from this, I put it off till the morrow; if I have friends that call in just at the moment, let them go away under pain of bearing my maledictions with them. What is there in their conversation to atone to me for the loss of one quarter of an hour at the 'witching time of night?' If it is on indifferent subjects, it is flat and insipid; if it grows animated and interesting, it requires a painful effort, and begets a feverish excitement. But let me once reach, and fairly establish myself in this favourite seat, and I can bid a gay defiance to mischance, and leave debts and duns, friends and foes, objections and arguments, far behind me. I would, if I could, have it surrounded with a balustrade of gold, for it has been to me a palace of delight. There golden thoughts unbidden betide me, and golden visions come to me. There the dance, the laugh, the song, the scenic deception greet me; there are wafted Shakspear's winged words, or Otway's plaintive lines; and there how often have I heard young Kemble's voice, trembling at its own beauty, and prolonging its liquid tones, like the murmur of the billowy surge on sounding shores! There I no longer torture a sentence or strain a paradox: the mind is full without an effort, pleased without asking why. It inhales an atmosphere of joy, and is steeped in all the luxury of woe. To show how much sympathy has to do with the effect, let us suppose any one to have a free admission to the rehearsals of a morning, what mortal would make use of it? One might as well be at the bottom of a well, or at the top of St. Paul's for any pleasure we should derive from the finest tragedy or comedy. No, a play is nothing without an audience, it is a satisfaction too great and too general not to be shared with others. But reverse this cold and comfortless picture—let the eager crowd beset the theatre-doors 'like bees in spring-time, when the sun with Taurus rides'—let the boxes be filled with innocence and beauty like beds of lilies on the first night of Isabella or Belvidera, see the flutter, the uneasy delight of expectation, see the big tear roll down the cheek of sensibility as the story proceeds—let us listen to the deep thunder of the pit, or catch the gallery's shout at some true master-stroke of passion; and we feel that a thousand hearts are beating in our bosoms, and hail the sparkling illusion reflected in a thousand eyes. The stage has, therefore, been justly styled 'a discipline of humanity'; for there is no place where the social principle is called forth with such strength and harmony, by a powerful interest in a common object. A crowd is everywhere else oppressive; but the fuller the play-house, the more intimately and cordially do we sympathise with every individual in it. Empty benches have as bad an effect on the spectator as on the players. This is one reason why so many mistakes are made with respect to plays and players, ere they come before the public. The taste is crude and uninformed till it is ripened by the blaze of lighted lamps and the sunshine of happy faces: the cold, critical faculty, the judgment of Managers and Committees asks the glow of sympathy and the buzz of approbation to prompt and guide it. We judge in a crowd with the sense and feelings of others; and from the very strength of the impression, fancy we should have come to the same unavoidable conclusion had we been left entirely to ourselves. Let any one try the experiment by reading a manuscript play, or seeing it acted—or by hearing a candidate for the stage rehearse behind the scenes, or *top* his part after the orchestra have performed their fatal prelude. Nor is the air of a play-house favourable only to social feeling—it aids the indulgence of solitary musing. The brimming cup of joy or sorrow is full; but it runs over to other thoughts and subjects. We can there (nowhere better) 'retire, the world shut out, our thoughts call home.' We hear the revelry and the shout, but 'the still, small voice' of other years and cherished recollections is not wanting. It is pleasant to hear Miss Ford repeat *Love's Catechism*, or Mrs. Humby[1] sing 'I cannot marry Crout': but the ear is not therefore deaf to Mrs. Jordan's laugh in Nell; Mrs. Goodall's Rosalind still haunts the glades of Arden, and the echo of Amiens' song, 'Blow, blow, thou winter's wind,' lingers through a lapse of thirty years. A pantomime (the Little Red Riding-Hood) recalls the innocence of our childish thoughts: a dance (the Minuet de la Cour) throws us back to the gorgeous days of Louis XIV. and tells us that the age of chivalry is gone for ever. Who will be the Mrs. Siddons of a distant age? What future Kean shall 'strut and fret his hour upon the stage,' full of genius and free from errors? What favourite actor or actress will be taking their farewell benefit a hundred years hence?

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[1] This lady is not, it is true, at Covent Garden: I wish she were!

What plays and what players will then amuse the town? Oh, many coloured scenes of human life! where are ye more truly represente than in the mirror of the stage? or where is that eternal principle o vicissitude which rules over ye, the painted pageant and the sudde gloom, more strikingly exemplified than here? At the entrance t our great theatres, in large capitals over the front of the stage, migh be written MUTABILITY! Does not the curtain that falls each nigh on the pomps and vanities it was withdrawn awhile to reveal (and th next moment all is dark) afford a fine moral lesson? Here, in smal room, is crowded the map of human life; the lengthened, varied scrol is unfolded like rich tapestry with its quaint and flaunting device spread out; whatever can be saved from the giddy whirl of ever rolling time and of this round orb, which moves on and never stops, all that can strike the sense, can touch the heart, can stir up laughte or call tears from their secret source, is here treasured up and displaye ostentatiously—here is Fancy's motley wardrobe, the masks of all the characters that were ever played—here is a glass set up clear an large enough to show us our own features and those of all mankind—here, in this enchanted mirror, are represented, not darkly, but in vivid hues and bold relief, the struggle of Life and Death, the momentary pause between the cradle and the grave, with charming hopes and fears, terror and pity in a thousand modes, strange and ghastly apparitions, the events of history, the fictions of poetry (warm from the heart); all these, and more than can be numbered in my feeble page, fill that airy space where the green curtain rises, and haunt it with evanescent shapes and indescribable yearnings.

'See o'er the stage the ghost of Hamlet stalks,
Othello rages, Desdemona mourns,
And poor Monimia pours her soul in love.'

Who can collect into one audible pulsation the thoughts and feelings that in the course of his life all these together have occasioned; or what heart, if it could recall them at once, and in their undiminished power and plenitude, would not burst with the load? Let not the style be deemed exaggerated, but tame and creeping, that attempts to do justice to this high and pregnant theme, and let tears blot out the unequal lines that the pen traces! Quaffing these delights, inhaling this atmosphere, brooding over these visions, this long trail of glory, is the possessor of a Free Admission to be blamed if 'he takes his ease' at the play; and turning theatrical recluse, and forgetful of himself and his friends, devotes himself to the study of the drama, and to dreams of the past? By constant habit (having nothing to do,

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[1] 'Mais vois la rapidité de cet astre qui vole et ne s'arrête jamais.'—*New Eloise.*

little else to think of), he becomes a tippler of the dews of Castaly—a dram-drinker on Mount Parnassus. He tastes the present moment, while a rich sea of pleasure presses to his lip and engulfs him round. The noise, the glare, the warmth, the company, produce a sort of listless intoxication, and clothe the pathos and the wit with a bodily sense. There is a weight, a closeness even, in the air, that makes it difficult to breathe out of it. The custom of going to the play night after night becomes a relief, a craving, a necessity—one cannot do without it. To sit alone is intolerable, to be in company is worse; we are attracted with pleasing force to the spot where 'all that mighty heart is beating still.' It is not that perhaps there is any thing new or fine to see—if there is, we attend to it—but at any time, it kills time and saves the trouble of thinking. O, Covent Garden! 'thy *freedom* hath made me effeminate!' It has hardly left me power to write this description of it. I am become its slave, I have no other sense or interest left. There I sit and lose the hours I live beneath the sky, without the power to stir, without any determination to stay. 'Teddy the Tiler' is become familiar to me, and, as it were, a part of my existence: 'Robert the Devil' has cast his spell over me. I have seen both thirty times at least, (no offence to the Management!) and could sit them out thirty times more. I am bed-rid in the lap of luxury; am grown callous and inert with perpetual excitement.

> ——'What avails from iron chains
> Exempt, if rosy fetters bind as fast?'

I have my favourite box too, as Beau Brummell had his favourite leg; one must decide on something, not to be always deciding. Perhaps I may have my reasons too—perhaps into the box next to mine a Grace enters; perhaps from thence an air divine breathes a glance (of heaven's own brightness), kindles contagious fire;—but let us turn all such thoughts into the lobbies. These may be considered as an Arabesque border round the inclosed tablet of human life. If the Muses reign within, Venus sports heedless, but not unheeded without. Here a bevy of fair damsels, richly clad, knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance, lead on 'the frozen winter and the pleasant spring!' Would I were allowed to attempt a list of some of them, and Cowley's *Gallery* would blush at mine! But this is a licence which only poetry, and not even a Free Admission can give. I can now understand the attachment to a player's life, and how impossible it is for those who are once engaged in it ever to wean themselves from it. If the merely witnessing the bustle and the splendour of the scene as an idle spectator creates such a fascination, and flings such a charm over it, how much more must this be the case with those who have given all their time and attention to it—who regard it as the sole means of distinction—with whom even the monotony and mortifications must please—and who, instead of being passive, casual votaries, are the dispensers of the bounty of the gods, and the high-priests at the altar?

THE SICK CHAMBER

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*August*, 1830.

What a difference between this subject and my last—a 'Free Admission!' Yet from the crowded theatre to the sick chamber, from the noise, the glare, the keen delight, to the loneliness, the darkness, the dulness, and the pain, there is but one step. A breath of air, an overhanging cloud effects it; and though the transition is made in an instant, it seems as if it would last for ever. A sudden illness not only puts a stop to the career of our triumphs and agreeable sensations, but blots out and cancels all recollection of and desire for them. We lose the relish of enjoyment; we are effectually cured of our romance. Our bodies are confined to our beds; nor can our thoughts wantonly detach themselves and take the road to pleasure, but turn back with doubt and loathing at the faint, evanescent phantom which has usurped its place. If the folding-doors of the imagination were thrown open or left a-jar, so that from the disordered couch where we lay, we could still hail the vista of the past or future, and see the gay and gorgeous visions floating at a distance, however denied to our embrace, the contrast, though mortifying, might have something soothing in it, the mock-splendour might be the greater for the actual gloom: but the misery is that we cannot conceive any thing beyond or better than the present evil; we are shut up and spell-bound in that, the curtains of the mind are drawn close, we cannot escape from 'the body of this death,' our souls are conquered, dismayed, 'cooped and cabined in,' and thrown with the lumber of our corporeal frames in one corner of a neglected and solitary room. We hate ourselves and every thing else; nor does one ray of comfort 'peep through the blanket of the dark' to give us hope. How should we entertain the image of grace and beauty, when our bodies writhe with pain? To what purpose invoke the echo of some rich strain of music, when we ourselves can scarcely breathe? The very attempt is an impossibility. We give up the vain task of linking delight to agony, of urging torpor into ecstasy, which makes the very heart sick. We feel the present pain, and an impatient longing to get rid of it. This were indeed 'a consummation devoutly to be wished': on this we are intent, in earnest, inexorable: all else is impertinence and folly; and could we but obtain *ease* (that Goddess of the infirm and suffering) at any price, we think we could forswear all other joy and all other sorrows. *Hoc erat in votis.* All other things but our disorder and its cure seem less than nothing and vanity. It assumes a palpable form; it becomes a demon, a spectre, an incubus hovering over and oppressing us: we grapple with it: it strikes its fangs into us, spreads its arms round us, infects us with its breath, glares upon us with its hideous aspect; we feel it take possession of every fibre and of every faculty; and we are at length so absorbed and fascinated by it, that we cannot divert our reflections from it for an instant, for all other things but pain (and that which we suffer most acutely,) appear to have lost their pith and power to interest. They are turned to dust and stubble. This is the reason of the fine resolutions we sometimes form in such cases, and of the vast superiority of a sick bed to the pomps and thrones of the world. We easily renounce wine when we have nothing but the taste of physic in our mouths: the rich banquet tempts us not, when 'our very gorge rises' within us: Love and Beauty fly from a bed twisted into a thousand folds by restless lassitude and tormenting cares: the nerve of pleasure is killed by the pains that shoot through the head or rack the limbs: an indigestion seizes you with its leaden grasp and giant force (down, Ambition!)—you shiver and tremble like a leaf in a fit of the ague (Avarice, let go your palsied hold!). We then are in the mood, without ghostly advice, to betake ourselves to the life of 'hermit poor,

'In pensive place obscure,'—

and should be glad to prevent the return of a fever raging in the blood by feeding on pulse, and slaking our thirst at the limpid brook. These sudden resolutions, however, or 'vows made in pain as violent and void,' are generally of short duration; the excess and the sorrow for it are alike selfish; and those repentances which are the most loud and passionate are the surest to end speedily in a relapse; for both originate in the same cause, the being engrossed by the prevailing feeling (whatever it may be), and an utter incapacity to look beyond it.

'The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be:
The Devil grew well, the Devil a monk was he!'

It is amazing how little effect physical suffering or local circumstances have upon the mind, except while we are subject to their immediate influence. While the impression lasts, they are every thing: when it is gone, they are nothing. We toss and tumble about in a sick bed; we lie on our right side, we then change to the left; w stretch ourselves on our backs, we turn on our faces; we wra ourselves up under the clothes to exclude the cold, we throw them o to escape the heat and suffocation; we grasp the pillow in agony we fling ourselves out of bed, we walk up and down the room wit hasty or feeble steps; we return into bed; we are worn out wit fatigue and pain, yet can get no repose for the one, or intermission fo the other; we summon all our patience, or give vent to passion an petty rage: nothing avails; we seem wedded to our disease, 'lik life and death in disproportion met;' we make new efforts, try nev expedients, but nothing appears to shake it off, or promise relief fro our grim foe: it infixes its sharp sting into us, or overpowers us b its sickly and stunning weight: every moment is as much as we ca bear, and yet there seems no end of our lengthening tortures; we ar ready to faint with exhaustion, or work ourselves up to frenzy: w 'trouble deaf Heaven with our bootless prayers:' we think our las hour is come, or peevishly wish it were, to put an end to the scene we ask questions as to the origin of evil and the necessity of pain; w 'moralise our complaints into a thousand similes'; we deny the us of medicine *in toto*, we have a full persuasion that all doctors ar mad or knaves, that our object is to gain relief, and theirs (out of th perversity of human nature, or to seem wiser than we) to prevent it we catechise the apothecary, rail at the nurse, and cannot so much a conceive the possibility that this state of things should not last fo ever; we are even angry at those who would give us encouragement as if they would make dupes or children of us; we might seek a releas by poison, a halter, or the sword, but we have not strength of min enough—our nerves are too shaken—to attempt even this poo revenge—when lo! a change comes, the spell falls off, and the nex moment we forget all that has happened to us. No sooner does ou disorder turn its back upon us than we laugh at it. The state w have been in, sounds like a dream, a fable; health is the order of th day, strength is ours *de jure* and *de facto*; and we discard all uncalled for evidence to the contrary with a smile of contemptuous incredulity just as we throw our physic-bottles out of the window! I see (as awake from a short, uneasy doze) a golden light shine through m white window-curtains on the opposite wall:—is it the dawn of a nev day, or the departing light of evening? I do not well know, for th opium 'they have drugged my posset with' has made strange havo with my brain, and I am uncertain whether time has stood still, o advanced, or gone backward. By 'puzzling o'er the doubt,' m attention is drawn a little out of myself to external objects; and I consider whether it would not administer some relief to my monotonou languour, if I could call up a vivid picture of an evening sky I witnessed a short while before, the white fleecy clouds, the azure vault, the verdant fields and balmy air. In vain! The wings of fancy refuse to mount from my bed-side. The air without has nothing in common with the closeness within: the clouds disappear, the sky is instantly overcast and black. I walk out in this scene soon after I recover; and with those favourite and well-known objects interposed, can no longer recall the tumbled pillow, the juleps or the labels, or the unwholesome dungeon in which I was before immured. What is contrary to our present sensations or settled habits, amalgamates indifferently with our belief: the imagination rules over imaginary themes, the senses and custom have a narrower sway, and admit but one guest at a time. It is hardly to be wondered at that we dread physical calamities so little beforehand: we think no more of them the moment after they have happened. *Out of sight, out of mind.* This will perhaps explain why all actual punishment has so little effect; it is a state contrary to nature, alien to the will. If it does not touch honour and conscience (and where these are not, how can it touch them?) it goes for nothing: and where these are, it rather sears and hardens them. The gyves, the cell, the meagre fare, the hard labour are abhorrent to the mind of the culprit on whom they are imposed, who carries the love of liberty or indulgence to licentiousness; and who throws the thought of them behind him (the moment he can evade the penalty,) with scorn and laughter,

'Like Samson his green wythes.'[1]

So, in travelling, we often meet with great fatigue and inconvenience from heat or cold, or rather accidents, and resolve never to go a journey again; but we are ready to set off on a new excursion to-morrow. We remember the landscape, the change of scene, the romantic expectation, and think no more of the heat, the noise, and dust. The body forgets its grievances, till they recur; but imagination, passion, pride, have a longer memory and quicker apprehensions. To the first the pleasure or the pain is nothing when once over; to the last it is only then that they begin to exist. The line in Metastasio,

'The worst of every evil is the fear,'

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[1] The thoughts of a captive can no more get beyond his prison-walls than his limbs, unless they are busied in planning an escape; as, on the contrary, what prisoner, after effecting his escape, ever suffered them to return there, or took common precautions to prevent his own? We indulge our fancy more than we consult our interest. The sense of personal identity has almost as little influence in practice as it has foundation in theory.

is true only when applied to this latter sort.—It is curious that, on coming out of a sick-room, where one has been pent some time, and grown weak and nervous, and looking at Nature for the first time, the objects that present themselves have a very questionable and spectral appearance, the people in the street resemble flies crawling about, and seem scarce half-alive. It is we who are just risen from a torpid and unwholesome state, and who impart our imperfect feelings of existence, health, and motion to others. Or it may be that the violence and exertion of the pain we have gone through make common every-day objects seem unreal and unsubstantial. It is not till we have established ourselves in form in the sitting-room, wheeled round the arm-chair to the fire (for this makes part of our re-introduction to the ordinary modes of being in all seasons,) felt our appetite return, and taken up a book, that we can be considered as at all restored to ourselves. And even then our first sensations are rather empirical than positive; as after sleep we stretch out our hands to know whether we are awake. This is the time for reading. Books are then indeed 'a world, both pure and good,' into which we enter with all our hearts, after our revival from illness and respite from the tomb, as with the freshness and novelty of youth. They are not merely acceptable as without too much exertion they pass the time and relieve *ennui*; but from a certain suspension and deadening of the passions, and abstraction from worldly pursuits, they may be said to bring back and be friendly to the guileless and enthusiastic tone of feeling with which we formerly read them. Sickness has weaned us *pro tempore* from contest and cabal; and we are fain to be docile and children again. All strong changes in our present pursuits throw us back upon the past. This is the shortest and most complete emancipation from our late discomfiture. We wonder that any one who has read *The History of a Foundling* should labour under an indigestion; nor do we comprehend how a perusal of the *Faery Queen* should not ensure the true believer an uninterrupted succession of halcyon days. Present objects bear a retrospective meaning, and point to 'a foregone conclusion.' Returning back to life with half-strung nerves and shattered strength, we seem as when we first entered it with uncertain purposes and faltering aims. The machine has received a shock, and it moves on more tremulously than before, and not all at once in the beaten track. Startled at the approach of death, we are willing to get as far from it as we can by making a proxy of our former selves; and finding the precarious tenure by which we hold existence, and its last sands running out, we gather up and make the most of the fragments that memory has stored up for us. Every thing is seen through a medium of reflection and contrast.

We hear the sound of merry voices in the street; and this carries us back to the recollections of some country-town or village-group—

> 'We see the children sporting on the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters roaring evermore.'

A cricket chirps on the hearth, and we are reminded of Christmas gambols long ago. The very cries in the street seem to be of a former date; and the dry toast eats very much as it did—twenty years ago. A rose smells doubly sweet, after being stifled with tinctures and essences; and we enjoy the idea of a journey and an inn the more for having been bed-rid. But a book is the secret and sure charm to bring all these implied associations to a focus. I should prefer an old one, Mr. Lamb's favourite, the *Journey to Lisbon*; or the *Decameron*, if I could get it; but if a new one, let it be *Paul Clifford*. That book has the singular advantage of being written by a gentleman, and not about his own class. The characters he commemorates are every moment at fault between life and death, hunger and a *forced loan* on the public; and therefore the interest they take in themselves, and which we take in them, has no cant or affectation in it, but is 'lively, audible, and full of vent.' A set of well-dressed gentlemen picking their teeth with a graceful air after dinner, endeavouring to keep their cravats from the slightest discomposure, and saying the most insipid things in the most insipid manner, do not make a *scene*. Well, then, I have got the new paraphrase on the *Beggar's Opera*, am fairly embarked on it; and at the end of the first volume, where I am galloping across the heath with the three highwaymen, while the moon is shining full upon them, feel my nerves so braced, and my spirits so exhilarated, that, to say truth, I am scarce sorry for the occasion that has thrown me upon the work and the author—have quite forgot my *Sick Room*, and am more than half ready to recant the doctrine that a *Free-Admission* to the theatre is

> —'The true pathos and sublime
> Of human life':—

for I feel as I read that if the stage shows us the masks of men and the pageant of the world, books let us into their souls and lay open to us the secrets of our own. They are the first and last, the most home-felt, the most heart-felt of all our enjoyments.

FOOTMEN

The New Monthly Magazine.] [*September*, 1830.

Footmen are no part of Christianity; but they are a very necessary appendage to our happy Constitution in Church and State. What would the bishop's mitre be without these grave supporters to his dignity? Even the plain presbyter does not dispense with his decent serving-man to stand behind his chair and load his duly emptied plate with beef and pudding, at which the genius of Ude turns pale. What would become of the coronet-coach filled with elegant and languid forms, if it were not for the triple row of powdered, laced, and liveried footmen, clustering, fluttering, and lounging behind it? What an idea do we not conceive of the fashionable *belle* who is making the most of her time and tumbling over silks and satins within at Sewell and Cross's, or at the Bazaar in Soho-square, from the tall lacquey in blue and silver with gold-headed cane, cocked-hat, white thread stockings and large calves to his legs, who stands as her representative without! The sleek shopman appears at the door, at an understood signal the livery-servant starts from his position, the coach-door flies open, the steps are let down, the young lady enters the carriage as young ladies are taught to step into carriages, the footman closes the the door, mounts behind, and the glossy vehicle rolls off, bearing its lovely burden and her gaudy attendant from the gaze of the gaping crowd! Is there not a spell in beauty, a charm in rank and fashion, that one would almost wish to be this fellow—to obey its nod, to watch its looks, to breathe but by its permission, and to live but for its use, its scorn, or pride?

Footmen are in general looked upon as a sort of supernumeraries in society—they have no place assigned them in any Scotch Encyclopædia—they do not come under any of the heads in Mr. Mill's Elements, or Mr. Maculloch's Principles of Political Economy; and they nowhere have had impartial justice done them, except in Lady Booby's love for one of that order. But if not 'the Corinthian capitals of polished society,' they are 'a graceful ornament to the civil order.' Lords and ladies could not do without them. Nothing exists in this world but by contrast. A foil is necessary to make the plainest truths self-evident. It is the very insignificance, the non-entity as it were of the gentlemen of the cloth, that constitutes their importance, and makes them an indispensable feature in the social system, by setting off the pretensions of their superiors to the best advantage. What would be the good of having a will of our own, if we had not others about us who are deprived of all will of their own, and who wear a badge to say 'I serve?' How can we show that we are the lords of the creation but by reducing others to the condition of machines, who never move but at the beck of our caprices? Is not the plain suit of the master wonderfully relieved by the borrowed trappings and mock-finery of his servant? You see that man on horseback who keeps at some distance behind another, who follows him as his shadow, turns as he turns, and as he passes or speaks to him, lifts his hand to his hat and observes the most profound attention--what is the difference between these two men? The one is as well mounted, as well fed, is younger and seemingly in better health than the other; but between these two there are perhaps seven or eight classes of society, each of whom is dependent on and trembles at the frown of the other—it is a nobleman and his lacquey. Let any one take a stroll towards the West-end of the town, South Audley or Upper Grosvenor-street; it is then he will feel himself first entering into the *beau-idéal* of civilized life, a society composed entirely of lords and footmen! Deliver me from the filth and cellars of St. Giles's, from the shops of Holborn and the Strand, from all that appertains to middle and to low life; and commend me to the streets with the straw at the doors and hatchments overhead to tell us of those who are just born or who are just dead, and with groups of footmen lounging on the steps and insulting the passengers —it is then I feel the true dignity and imaginary pretensions of human nature realised! There is here none of the squalidness of poverty, none of the hardships of daily labour, none of the anxiety and petty artifice of trade; life's business is changed into a romance, a summer's-dream, and nothing painful, disgusting, or vulgar intrudes. All is on a liberal and handsome scale. The true ends and benefits of society are here enjoyed and bountifully lavished, and all the trouble and misery banished, and not even allowed so much as to exist in thought. Those who would find the real Utopia, should look for it somewhere about Park-lane or May Fair. It is there only any feasible approach to equality is made—for it is *like master like man.* Here, as I look down Curzon-street, or catch a glimpse of the taper spire of South Audley Chapel, or the family-arms on the gate of Chesterfield-House, the vista of years opens to me, and I recall the period of the triumph of Mr. Burke's 'Reflections on the French Revolution,' and the overthrow of 'The Rights of Man!' You do not indeed penetrate to the interior of the mansion where sits the stately possessor, luxurious and refined; but you draw your inference from the lazy, pampered, motley crew poured forth from his portals. This mealy-coated, moth-like, butterfly-generation, seem to have no earthly business but to enjoy themselves. Their green liveries accord with the budding leaves and spreading branches of the trees in Hyde Park

—they seem 'like brothers of the groves'—their red faces and powdered heads harmonise with the blossoms of the neighbouring almond-trees, that shoot their sprays over old-fashioned brick-walls. They come forth like grasshoppers in June, as numerous and as noisy. They bask in the sun and laugh in your face. Not only does the master enjoy an uninterrupted leisure and tranquillity—those in his employment have nothing to do. He wants drones, not drudges, about him, to share his superfluity, and give a haughty pledge of his exemption from care. They grow sleek and wanton, saucy and supple. From being independent of the world, they acquire the look of *gentlemen's gentlemen.* There is a cast of the aristocracy, with a slight shade of distinction. The saying, 'Tell me your company, and I'll tell you your manners,' may be applied *cum grano salis* to the servants in great families. Mr. N—— knew an old butler who had lived with a nobleman so long, and had learned to imitate his walk, look, and way of speaking, so exactly that it was next to impossible to tell them apart. See the porter in the great leather-chair in the hall—how big, and burly, and self-important he looks; while my Lord's gentleman (the politician of the family) is reading the second edition of 'The Courier' (once more in request) at the side window, and the footman is romping, or taking tea with the maids in the kitchen below. A match-girl meanwhile plies her shrill trade at the railing; or a gipsey-woman passes with her rustic wares through the street, avoiding the closer haunts of the city. What a pleasant farce is that of 'High Life Below Stairs!' What a careless life do the domestics of the Great lead! For, not to speak of the reflected self-importance of their masters and mistresses, and the contempt with which they look down on the herd of mankind, they have only to eat and drink their fill, talk the scandal of the neighbourhood, laugh at the follies, or assist the intrigues of their betters, till they themselves fall in love, marry, set up a public house, (the only thing they are fit for,) and without habits of industry, resources in themselves, or self-respect, and drawing fruitless comparisons with the past, are, of all people, the most miserable! Service is no inheritance; and when it fails, there is not a more helpless, or more worthless set of devils in the world. Mr. C—— used to say he should like to be a footman to some elderly lady of quality, to carry her prayer-book to church, and place her cassock right for her. There can be no doubt that this would have been better, and quite as useful as the life he has led, dancing attendance on Prejudice, but flirting with Paradox in such a way as to cut himself out of the old lady's will. For my part, if I had to choose, I should prefer the service of a young mistress, and might share the fate of the footman recorded in heroic verse by

Lady Wortley Montagu. Certainly it can be no hard duty, though a sort of *forlorn hope*, to have to follow three sisters, or youthful friends, (resembling the three Graces,) at a slow pace, and with grave demeanour, from Cumberland Gate to Kensington Gardens—to be there shut out, a privation enhancing the privilege, and making the sense of distant, respectful, idolatrous admiration more intense—and then, after a brief interval lost in idle chat, or idler reverie, to have to follow them back again, observing, not observed, to keep within call, to watch every gesture, to see the breeze play with the light tresses or lift the morning robe aside, to catch the half-suppressed laugh, and hear the low murmur of indistinct words and wishes, like the music of the spheres. An *amateur footman* would seem a more rational occupation than that of an amateur author, or an amateur artist. An insurmountable barrier, if it excludes passion, does not banish sentiment, but draws an atmosphere of superstitious, trembling apprehension round the object of so much attention and respect; nothing makes women seem so much like angels as always to see, never to converse with them; and those whom we have to dangle a cane after must, to a lacquey of any spirit, appear worthy to wield sceptres.

But of all situations of this kind, the most enviable is that of a lady's maid in a family travelling abroad. In the obtuseness of foreigners to the nice gradations of English refinement and manners, the maid has not seldom a chance of being taken for the mistress—a circumstance never to be forgot! See our Abigail mounted in the *dicky* with my Lord, or John, snug and comfortable—setting out on the grand tour as fast as four horses can carry her, whirled over the 'vine-covered hills and gay regions of France,' crossing the Alps and Apennines in breathless terror and wonder—frightened at a precipice, laughing at her escape—coming to the inn, going into the kitchen to see what is to be had—not speaking a word of the language, except what she picks up, 'as pigeons pick up peas:'—the bill paid, the passport *visé*, the horses put to, and *au route* again—seeing every thing, and understanding nothing, in a full tide of health, fresh air, and animal spirits, and without one qualm of taste or sentiment, and arriving at Florence, the city of palaces, with its amphitheatre of hills and olives, without suspecting that such a person as Boccacio, Dante, or Galileo, had ever lived there, while her young mistress is puzzled with the varieties of the Tuscan dialect, is disappointed in the Arno, and cannot tell what to make of the statue of David by Michael Angelo, in the Great Square. The difference is, that the young lady, on her return, has something to think of; but the maid absolutely forgets every thing, and is only giddy and out of breath, as if she had been up in a balloon.

'No more: where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise!'

English servants abroad, notwithstanding the comforts they enjoy, and although travelling as it were *en famille*, must be struck with the ease and familiar footing on which foreigners live with their domestics, compared with the distance and reserve with which they are treated. The housemaid (*la bonne*) sits down in the room, or walks abreast with you in the street; and the valet who waits behind his master's chair at table, gives Monsieur his advice or opinion without being asked for it. We need not wonder at this familiarity and freedom, when we consider that those who allowed it could (formerly at least, when the custom began) send those who transgressed but in the smallest degree to the Bastille or the galleys at their pleasure. The licence was attended with perfect impunity. With us the law leaves less to discretion; and by interposing a real independence (and plea of right) between the servant and master, does away with the appearance of it on the surface of manners. The insolence and tyranny of the Aristocracy fell more on the trades-people and mechanics than on their domestics, who were attached to them by a semblance of feudal ties. Thus an upstart lady of quality (an imitator of the old school) would not deign to speak to a milliner while fitting on her dress, but gave her orders to her waiting-women to tell her what to do. Can we wonder at twenty *reigns of terror* to efface such a feeling?

I have alluded to the inclination in servants in great houses to ape the manners of their superiors, and to their sometimes succeeding. What facilitates the metamorphosis is, that the Great, in their character of *courtiers*, are a sort of footmen in their turn. There is the same crouching to interest and authority in either case, with the same surrender or absence of personal dignity—the same submission to the trammels of outward form, with the same suppression of inward impulses—the same degrading finery, the same pretended deference in the eye of the world, and the same lurking contempt from being admitted behind the scenes, the same heartlessness, and the same eye-service—in a word, they are alike puppets governed by motives not their own, machines made of coarser or finer materials. It is not, therefore, surprising, if the most finished courtier of the day cannot, by a vulgar eye, be distinguished from a gentleman's servant. M. de Bausset, in his amusing and excellent *Memoirs*, makes it an argument of the legitimacy of Napoleon's authority, that from denying it, it would follow that his lords of the bed-chamber were valets, and he himself (as prefect of the palace) no better than head-cook. The inference is logical enough. According to the author's view, there was no other difference between the retainers of the court and the kitchen than the rank of the master!

I remember hearing it said that 'all men were equal but footmen.' But of all footmen the lowest class is *literary footmen.* These consist of persons who, without a single grain of knowledge, taste, or feeling, put on the livery of learning, mimic its phrases by rote, and are retained in its service by dint of quackery and assurance alone. As they have none of the essence, they have all the externals of men of gravity and wisdom. They wear green spectacles, walk with a peculiar strut, thrust themselves into the acquaintance of persons they hear talked of, get introduced into the clubs, are seen reading books they do not understand at the Museum and public libraries, dine (if they can) with lords or officers of the Guards, abuse any party as *low* to show what fine gentlemen they are, and the next week join the same party to raise their own credit and gain a little consequence, give themselves out as wits, critics, and philosophers (and as they have never done any thing, no man can contradict them), and have a great knack of turning editors, and not paying their contributors. If you get five pounds from one of them, he never forgives it. With the proceeds thus appropriated, the book-worm graduates a dandy, hires expensive apartments, sports a tandem, and it is inferred that he must be a great author who can support such an appearance with his pen, and a great genius who can conduct so many learned works while his time is devoted to the gay, the fair, and the rich. This introduces him to new editorships, to new and more select friendships, and to more frequent and importunate demands from debts and duns. At length the bubble bursts and disappears, and you hear no more of our classical adventurer, except from the invectives and self-reproaches of those who took him for a great scholar from his wearing green spectacles and Wellington-boots. Such a candidate for literary honours bears the same relation to the man of letters, that the valet with his second-hand finery and servile airs does to his master.

ON THE WANT OF MONEY

The Monthly Magazine.] [*January,* 1827.

It is hard to be without money. To get on without it is like travelling in a foreign country without a passport—you are stopped, suspected, and made ridiculous at every turn, besides being subjected to the most serious inconveniences. The want of money I here allude to is not altogether that which arises from absolute poverty—

for where there is a downright absence of the common necessaries of life, this must be remedied by incessant hard labour, and the least we can receive in return is a supply of our daily wants—but that uncertain, casual, precarious mode of existence, in which the temptation to spend remains after the means are exhausted, the want of money joined with the hope and possibility of getting it, the intermediate state of difficulty and suspense between the last guinea or shilling and the next that we may have the good luck to encounter. This gap, this unwelcome interval constantly recurring, however shabbily got over, is really full of many anxieties, misgivings, mortifications, meannesses, and deplorable embarrassments of every description. I may attempt (this essay is not a fanciful speculation) to enlarge upon a few of them.

It is hard to go without one's dinner through sheer distress, but harder still to go without one's breakfast. Upon the strength of that first and aboriginal meal, one may muster courage to face the difficulties before one, and to dare the worst: but to be roused out of one's warm bed, and perhaps a profound oblivion of care, with golden dreams (for poverty does not prevent golden dreams), and told there is nothing for breakfast, is cold comfort for which one's half-strung nerves are not prepared, and throws a damp upon the prospects of the day. It is a bad beginning. A man without a breakfast is a poor creature, unfit to go in search of one, to meet the frown of the world, or to borrow a shilling of a friend. He may beg at the corner of a street—nothing is too mean for the tone of his feelings—robbing on the highway is out of the question, as requiring too much courage, and some opinion of a man's self. It is, indeed, as old Fuller, or some worthy of that age, expresses it, 'the heaviest stone which melancholy can throw at a man,' to learn, the first thing after he rises in the morning, or even to be dunned with it in bed, that there is no loaf, tea, or butter in the house, and that the baker, the grocer, and butterman have refused to give any farther credit. This is taking one sadly at a disadvantage. It is striking at one's spirit and resolution in their very source,—the stomach—it is attacking one on the side of hunger and mortification at once; it is casting one into the very mire of humility and Slough of Despond. The worst is, to know what face to put upon the matter, what excuse to make to the servants, what answer to send to the tradespeople; whether to laugh it off, or be grave, or angry, or indifferent; in short, to know how to parry off an evil which you cannot help. What a luxury, what a God's-send in such a dilemma, to find a half-crown which had slipped through a hole in the lining of your waistcoat, a crumpled bank-note in your breeches-pocket, or a guinea clinking in the bottom of your trunk, which had been thoughtlessly left there out of a former heap! Vain hope! Unfounded illusion! The experienced in such matters know better, and laugh in their sleeves at so improbable a suggestion. Not a corner, not a cranny, not a pocket, not a drawer has been left unrummaged, or has not been subjected over and over again to more than the strictness of a custom-house scrutiny. Not the slightest rustle of a piece of bank-paper, not the gentlest pressure of a piece of hard metal, but would have given notice of its hiding-place with electrical rapidity, long before, in such circumstances. All the variety of pecuniary resources which form a legal tender on the current coin of the realm, are assuredly drained, exhausted to the last farthing before this time. But is there nothing in the house that one can turn to account? Is there not an old family-watch, or piece of plate, or a ring, or some worthless trinket that one could part with? nothing belonging to one's-self or a friend, that one could raise the wind upon, till something better turns up? At this moment an old clothes-man passes, and his deep, harsh tones sound like an intended insult on one's distress, and banish the thought of applying for his assistance, as one's eye glanced furtively at an old hat or a great coat, hung up behind a closet-door. Humiliating contemplations! Miserable uncertainty! One hesitates, and the opportunity is gone by; for without one's breakfast, one has not the resolution to do any thing!—The late Mr. Sheridan was often reduced to this unpleasant predicament. Possibly he had little appetite for breakfast himself; but the servants complained bitterly on this head, and said that Mrs. Sheridan was sometimes kept waiting for a couple of hours, while they had to hunt through the neighbourhood, and beat up for coffee, eggs, and French rolls. The same perplexity in this instance appears to have extended to the providing for the dinner; for so sharp-set were they, that to cut short a debate with a butcher's apprentice about leaving a leg of mutton without the money, the cook clapped it into the pot: the butcher's boy, probably used to such encounters, with equal coolness took it out again, and marched off with it in his tray in triumph. It required a man to be the author of THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL, to run the gauntlet of such disagreeable occurrences every hour of the day. There was one comfort, however, that poor Sheridan had: he did not foresee that Mr. Moore would write his Life![1]

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[1] Taylor, of the Opera-House, used to say of Sheridan, that he could not pull off his hat to him in the street without its costing him fifty pounds; and if he stopped to speak to him, it was a hundred. No one could be a stronger instance than he was of what is called *living from hand to mouth*. He was always in want of money, though he received vast sums which he must have disbursed; and yet nobody can

The going without a dinner is another of the miseries of wanting money, though one can bear up against this calamity better than the

tell what became of them, for he paid nobody. He spent his wife's fortune (sixteen hundred pounds) in a six weeks' jaunt to Bath, and returned to town as poor as a rat. Whenever he and his son were invited out into the country, they always went in two post-chaises and four; he in one, and his son Tom following in another. This is the secret of those who live in a round of extravagance, and are at the same time always in debt and difficulty—they throw away all the ready money they get upon any new-fangled whim or project that comes in their way, and never think of paying off old scores, which of course accumulate to a dreadful amount. 'Such gain the cap of him who makes them fine, yet keeps his book uncrossed.' Sheridan once wanted to take Mrs. Sheridan a very handsome dress down into the country, and went to Barber and Nunn's to order it, saying he must have it by such a day, but promising they should have ready money. Mrs. Barber (I think it was) made answer that the time was short, but that ready money was a very charming thing, and that he should have it. Accordingly, at the time appointed she brought the dress, which came to five-and-twenty pounds, and it was sent in to Mr. Sheridan: who sent out a Mr. Grimm (one of his jackalls) to say he admired it exceedingly, and that he was sure Mrs. Sheridan would be delighted with it, but he was sorry to have nothing under a hundred pound bank-note in the house. She said she had come provided for such an accident, and could give change for a hundred, two hundred, or five hundred pound note, if it were necessary. Grimm then went back to his principal for farther instructions: who made an excuse that he had no stamped receipt by him. For this, Mrs. B. said, she was also provided; she had brought one in her pocket. At each message, she could hear them laughing heartily in the next room at the idea of having met with their match for once; and presently after, Sheridan came out in high good-humour, and paid her the amount of her bill, in ten, five, and one pounds. Once when a creditor brought him a bill for payment, which had often been presented before, and the man complained of its soiled and tattered state, and said he was quite ashamed to see it, 'I 'll tell you what I 'd advise you to do with it, my friend,' said Sheridan, 'take it home, and write it upon *parchment*!' He once mounted a horse which a horse-dealer was shewing off near a coffee-house at the bottom of St. James's-street, rode it to Tattersall's, and sold it, and walked quietly back to the spot from which he set out. The owner was furious, swore he would be the death of him; and, in quarter of an hour afterwards they were seen sitting together over a bottle of wine in the coffee-house, the horse-jockey with the tears running down his face at Sheridan's jokes, and almost ready to hug him as an honest fellow. Sheridan's house and lobby were beset with duns every morning, who were told that Mr. Sheridan was not yet up, and shewn into the several rooms on each side of the entrance. As soon as he had breakfasted, he asked, 'Are those doors all shut, John?' and, being assured they were, marched out very deliberately between them, to the astonishment of his self-invited guests, who soon found the bird was flown. I have heard one of his old City friends declare, that such was the effect of his frank, cordial manner, and insinuating eloquence, that he was always afraid to go to ask him for a debt of long standing, lest he should borrow twice as much. A play had been put off one night, or a favourite actor did not appear, and the audience demanded to have their money back again: but when they came to the door, they were told by the check-takers there was none for them, for that Mr. Sheridan had been in the mean time, and had carried off all the money in the till. He used often to get the old cobbler who kept a stall under the ruins of Drury Lane to broil a beef-steak for him, and take former, which really 'blights the tender blossom and promise of the day.' With one good meal, one may hold a parley with hunger and moralize upon temperance. One has time to turn one's-self and look about one—to 'screw one's courage to the sticking-place,' to graduate the scale of disappointment, and stave off appetite till supper-time. You gain time, and time in this weather-cock world is everything. You may dine at two, or at six, or seven—as most convenient. You may in the meanwhile receive an invitation to dinner, or some one (not knowing how you are circumstanced) may send you a present of a haunch of venison or a brace of pheasants from the country, or a distant relation may die and leave you a legacy, or a patron may call and overwhelm you with his smiles and bounty,

> 'As kind as kings upon their coronation-day;'

or there is no saying what may happen. One may wait for dinner—breakfast admits of no delay, of no interval interposed between that and our first waking thoughts.[1] Besides, there are shifts and devices, shabby and mortifying enough, but still available in case of need.

their dinner together. On the night that Drury Lane was burnt down, Sheridan was in the House of Commons, making a speech, though he could hardly stand without leaning his hands on the table, and it was with some difficulty he was forced away, urging the plea, 'What signified the concerns of a private individual, compared to the good of the state?' When he got to Covent-Garden, he went into the Piazza Coffee-house, to steady himself with another bottle, and then strolled out to the end of the Piazza to look at the progress of the fire. Here he was accosted by Charles Kemble and Fawcett, who complimented him on the calmness with which he seemed to regard so great a loss. He declined this praise, and said—'Gentlemen, there are but three things in human life that in my opinion ought to disturb a wise man's patience. The first of these is bodily pain, and that (whatever the ancient stoics may have said to the contrary) is too much for any man to bear without flinching: this I have felt severely, and I know it to be the case. The second is the loss of a friend whom you have dearly loved; that, gentlemen, is a great evil: this I have also felt, and I know it to be too much for any man's fortitude. And the third is the consciousness of having done an unjust action. That, gentlemen, is a great evil, a very great evil, too much for any man to endure the reflection of; but that' (laying his hand upon his heart,) 'but that, thank God, I have never felt!' I have been told that these were nearly the very words, except that he appealed to the *mens conscia recti* very emphatically three or four times over, by an excellent authority, Mr. Mathews the player, who was on the spot at the time, a gentleman whom the public admire deservedly, but with whose real talents and nice discrimination of character his friends only are acquainted. Sheridan's reply to the watchman who had picked him up in the street, and who wanted to know who he was, 'I am Mr. Wilberforce!'—is well known, and shews that, however frequently he might be at a loss for money, he never wanted wit!

[1] In Scotland, it seems, the draught of ale or whiskey with which you commence the day, is emphatically called 'taking your *morning*.'

How many expedients are there in this great city (London), time out of mind and times without number, resorted to by the dilapidated and thrifty speculator, to get through this grand difficulty without utter failure! One may dive into a cellar, and dine on boiled beef and carrots for tenpence, with the knives and forks chained to the table, and jostled by greasy elbows that seem to make such a precaution not unnecessary (hunger is proof against indignity!)—or one may contrive to part with a superfluous article of wearing apparel, and carry home a mutton-chop and cook it in a garret; or one may drop in at a friend's at the dinner-hour, and be asked to stay or not; or one may walk out and take a turn in the Park, about the time, and return home to tea, so as at least to avoid the sting of the evil—the appearance of not having dined. You then have the laugh on your side, having deceived the gossips, and can submit to the want of a sumptuous repast without murmuring, having saved your pride, and made a virtue of necessity. I say all this may be done by a man without a family (for what business has a man without money with one?—*See English Malthus and Scotch Macculloch*)—and it is only my intention here to bring forward such instances of the want of money as are tolerable both in theory and practice. I once lived on coffee (as an experiment) for a fortnight together, while I was finishing the copy of a half-length portrait of a Manchester manufacturer, who had died worth a plum. I rather slurred over the coat, which was a reddish brown, 'of formal cut,' to receive my five guineas, with which I went to market myself, and dined on sausages and mashed potatoes, and while they were getting ready, and I could hear them hissing in the pan, read a volume of Gil Blas, containing the account of the fair Aurora. This was in the days of my youth. Gentle reader, do not smile! Neither Monsieur de Very, nor Louis XVIII., over an oyster-pàté, nor Apicius himself, ever understood the meaning of the word *luxury*, better than I did at that moment! If the want of money has its drawbacks and disadvantages, it is not without its contrasts and counterbalancing effects, for which I fear nothing else can make us amends. Amelia's *hashed mutton* is immortal; and there is something amusing, though carried to excess and caricature (which is very unusual with the author) in the contrivances of old Caleb, in 'The Bride of Lammermuir,' for raising the wind at breakfast, dinner, and supper-time. I recollect a ludicrous instance of a disappointment in a dinner which happened to a person of my acquaintance some years ago. He was not only poor but a very poor creature, as will be imagined. His wife had laid by fourpence (their whole remaining stock) to pay for the baking of a shoulder of mutton and potatoes, which they had in the house, and on her return home from some errand, she found he had expended it in purchasing a new string for a guitar. On this occasion a witty friend quoted the lines from Milton:

> 'And ever against *eating* cares,
> Wrap me in soft Lydian airs!'

Defoe, in his *Life of Colonel Jack*, gives a striking picture of his young beggarly hero sitting with his companion for the first time in his life at a three-penny ordinary, and the delight with which he relished the hot smoking soup, and the airs with which he called about him—'and every time,' he says, 'we called for bread, or beer, or whatever it might be, the waiter answered, "coming, gentlemen, coming;" and this delighted me more than all the rest!' It was about this time, as the same pithy author expresses it, 'the Colonel took upon him to wear a shirt!' Nothing can be finer than the whole of the feeling conveyed in the commencement of this novel, about wealth and finery from the immediate contrast of privation and poverty. One would think it a labour, like the Tower of Babel, to build up a beau and a fine gentleman about town. The little vagabond's admiration of the old man at the banking-house, who sits surrounded by heaps of gold as if it were a dream or poetic vision, and his own eager anxious visits, day by day, to the hoard he had deposited in the hollow tree, are in the very foremost style of truth and nature. See the same intense feeling expressed in Luke's address to his riches in the *City Madam*, and in the extraordinary raptures of the 'Spanish Rogue' in contemplating and hugging his ingots of pure gold and Spanish pieces of eight: to which Mr. Lamb has referred in excuse for the rhapsodies of some of our elder poets on this subject, which to our present more refined and tamer apprehensions sound like blasphemy.[1] In earlier times, before the diffusion of luxury, of knowledge, and other sources of enjoyment had become common, and acted as a diversion to the cravings of avarice, the passionate admiration, the idolatry, the hunger and thirst of wealth and all its precious symbols, was a kind of madness or hallucination, and Mammon was truly worshipped as a god!

It is among the miseries of the want of money, not to be able to pay your reckoning at an inn—or, if you have just enough to do that, to have nothing left for the waiter;—to be stopped at a turnpike gate, and forced to turn back;—not to venture to call a hackney-coach in a shower of rain—(when you have only one shilling left yourself, it is a *bore* to have it taken out of your pocket by a friend, who comes into your house eating peaches in a hot summer's day, and desiring you to pay for the coach in which he visits you);—not to be able to purchase a lottery-ticket, by which you might make your fortune, and get out of all your difficulties;—or to find a letter lying for you at a country post-office, and not to have money in your pocket to free it, and be obliged to return for it the next day. The letter so unseasonably withheld may be supposed to contain money, and in this case there is a foretaste, a sort of actual possession taken through the thin folds of the paper and the wax, which in some measure indemnifies us for the delay: the bank-note, the post-bill seems to smile upon us, and shake hands through its prison bars;—or it may be a love-letter, and then the tantalization is at its height: to be deprived in this manner of the only consolation that can make us amends for the want of money, by this very want—to fancy you can see the name—to try to get a peep at the hand-writing—to touch the seal, and yet not dare to break it open—is provoking indeed—the climax of amorous and gentlemanly distress. Players are sometimes reduced to great extremity, by the seizure of their scenes and dresses, or (what is called) *the property of the theatre*, which hinders them from acting; as authors are prevented from finishing a work, for want of money to buy the books necessary to be consulted on some material point or circumstance, in the progress of it. There is a set of poor devils, who live upon a printed *prospectus* of a work that never will be written, for which they solicit your name and half-a-crown. Decayed actresses take an annual benefit at one of the theatres; there are patriots who live upon periodical subscriptions, and critics who go about the country lecturing on poetry. I confess I envy none of these; but there are persons who, provided they can live, care not how they live—who are fond of display, even when it implies exposure; who court notoriety under every shape, and embrace the public with demonstrations of wantonness. There are genteel beggars, who send up a well-penned epistle requesting the loan of a shilling. Your snug bachelors and retired old-maids pretend they can distinguish the knock of one of these at their door. I scarce know which I dislike the most—the patronage that affects to bring premature genius into notice, or that extends its piecemeal, formal charity towards it in its decline. I hate your Literary Funds, and Funds for Decayed Artists—they are corporations for the encouragement of meanness, pretence, and insolence. Of all people, I cannot tell how it is, but players appear to me the best able to do without money. They are a privileged class. If not exempt from the common calls of necessity and business, they are enabled 'by their so potent art' to soar above them. As they make imaginary ills their own, real ones become imaginary, sit light upon them, and are thrown off with comparatively little trouble. Their life is theatrical—its various accidents are the shifting scenes of a play—rags and finery, tears and laughter, a mock-dinner or a real one, a crown of jewels or of straw, are to them nearly the same. I am sorry I cannot carry on this reasoning to actors who are past their prime. The gilding of their profession is then worn off, and shews the false metal beneath; vanity and hope (the props of their existence) have had their day; their former gaiety and carelessness serve as a foil to their present discouragements; and want and infirmities press upon them at once. 'We know what we are,' as Ophelia says, 'but we know not what we shall be.' A workhouse seems the last resort of poverty and distress—a *parish-pauper* is another name for all that is mean and to be deprecated in human existence. But that name is but an abstraction, an average term—'within that lowest deep, a lower deep may open to receive us.' I heard not long ago of a poor man, who had been for many years a respectable tradesman in London, and who was compelled to take shelter in one of those receptacles of age and wretchedness, and who said he could be contented with it—he had his regular meals, a nook in the chimney, and a coat to his back—but he was forced to lie three in a bed, and one of the three was out of his mind and crazy, and his great delight was, when the others fell asleep, to tweak their noses, and flourish his night-cap over their heads, so that they were obliged to lie awake, and hold him down between them. One should be quite mad to bear this. To what a point of insignificance may not human life dwindle! To what fine, agonizing threads will it not cling! Yet this man had been a lover in his youth, in a humble way, and still begins his letters to an old-maid (his former flame), who sometimes comforts him by listening to his complaints, and treating him to a dish of weak tea, 'MY DEAR MISS NANCY!'

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[1] Shylock's lamentation over the loss of 'his daughter and his ducats,' is another case in point.

Another of the greatest miseries of a want of money, is the tap of a dun at your door, or the previous silence when you expect it—the uneasy sense of shame at the approach of your tormentor; the wish to meet, and yet to shun the encounter; the disposition to bully; the fear of irritating; the real and the sham excuses; the submission to impertinence; the assurances of a speedy supply; the disingenuousness you practise on him and on yourself; the degradation in the eyes of others and your own. Oh! it is wretched to have to confront a just and oft-repeated demand, and to be without the means to satisfy it; to deceive the confidence that has been placed in you; to forfeit your credit; to be placed at the power of another, to be indebted to his lenity; to stand convicted of having played the knave or the fool; and to have no way left to escape contempt, but by incurring pity

The suddenly meeting a creditor on turning the corner of a street, whom you have been trying to avoid for months, and had persuaded you were several hundred miles off, discomposes the features and shatters the nerves for some time. It is also a serious annoyance to be unable to repay a loan to a friend, who is in want of it—nor is it very pleasant to be so hard-run, as to be induced to request the repayment. It is difficult to decide the preference between debts of honour and legal demands; both are bad enough, and almost a fair excuse for driving any one into the hands of money-lenders—to whom an application, if successful, is accompanied with a sense of being in the vulture's gripe—a reflection akin to that of those who formerly sold themselves to the devil—or, if unsuccessful, is rendered doubly galling by the smooth, civil leer of cool contempt with which you are dismissed, as if they had escaped from your clutches—not you from their's. If any thing can be added to the mortification and distress arising from straitened circumstances, it is when vanity comes in to barb the dart of poverty—when you have a picture on which you had calculated, rejected from an Exhibition, or a manuscript returned on your hands, or a tragedy damned, at the very instant when your cash and credit are at the lowest ebb. This forlorn and helpless feeling has reached its *acme* in the prison-scene in Hogarth's Rake's Progress, where his unfortunate hero has just dropped the Manager's letter from his hands, with the laconic answer written in it:—'Your play has been read, and won't do.'[1] To feel poverty is bad; but to feel it with the additional sense of our incapacity to shake it off, and that we have not merit enough to retrieve our circumstances—and, instead of being held up to admiration, are exposed to persecution and insult—is the last stage of human infirmity. My friend, Mr. Leigh Hunt (no one is better qualified than he to judge) thinks, that the most pathetic story in the world is that of Smollett's fine gentleman and lady in gaol, who have been roughly handled by the mob for some paltry attempt at raising the wind, and she exclaims in extenuation of the pitiful figure he cuts, 'Ah! he was a fine fellow once!'

It is justly remarked by the poet, that poverty has no greater inconvenience attached to it than that of making men ridiculous. It not only has this disadvantage with respect to ourselves, but it often shews us others in a very contemptible point of view. People are not soured by misfortune, but by the reception they meet with in it. When we do not want assistance, every one is ready to obtrude it on us, as if it were advice. If we do, they shun us instantly. They anticipate the increased demand on their sympathy or bounty, and escape from it as from a falling house. It is a mistake, however, that we court the society of the rich and prosperous, merely with a view to what we can get from them. We do so, because there is something in external rank and splendour that gratifies and imposes on the imagination; just as we prefer the company of those who are in good health and spirits to that of the sickly and hypochondriacal, or as we would rather converse with a beautiful woman than with an ugly one. I never knew but one man who would lend his money freely and fearlessly in spite of circumstances (if you were likely to pay him, he grew peevish, and would pick a quarrel with you). I can only account for this from a certain sanguine buoyancy and magnificence of spirit, not deterred by distant consequences, or damped by untoward appearances. I have been told by those, who shared of the same bounty, that it was not owing to generosity, but ostentation—if so, he kept his ostentation a secret from me, for I never received a hint or a look from which I could infer that I was not the lender, and he the person obliged. Neither was I expected to keep in the background or play an under-part. On the contrary, I was encouraged to do my best; my dormant faculties roused, the ease of my circumstances was on condition of the freedom and independence of my mind, my lucky hits were applauded, and I was paid to shine. I am not ashamed of such patronage as this, nor do I regret any circumstance relating to it but its termination. People endure existence even in Paris: the rows of chairs on the Boulevards are gay with smiles and dress: the saloons, they say, are brilliant; at the theatre there is Mademoiselle Mars—what is all this to me? After a certain period, we live only in the past. Give me back one single evening at Boxhill, after a stroll in the deep-empurpled woods, before Buonaparte was yet beaten, 'with wine of attic taste,' when wit, beauty, friendship presided at the board! Oh no! Neither the time nor friends that are fled, can be recalled!—Poverty is the test of sincerity, the touchstone of civility. Even abroad, they treat you scurvily if your remittances do not arrive regularly, and though you have hitherto lived like a *Milord Anglais*. The want of money loses us friends not worth the keeping, mistresses who are naturally jilts or coquets; it cuts us out of society, to which dress and equipage are the only introduction; and deprives us of a number of luxuries and advantages of which the only good is, that they can only belong to the possessors of a large fortune. Many people are wretched because they have not money to buy a fine horse, or to hire a fine house, or to keep a carriage, or to purchase a diamond necklace, or to go to a race-ball, or to give their servants new liveries.

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[1] It is provoking enough, and makes one look like a fool, to receive a printed notice of a blank in the last lottery, with a postscript hoping for your future favours.

I cannot myself enter into all this. If I can *live to think, and think to live,* I am satisfied. Some want to possess pictures, others to collect libraries. All I wish is, sometimes, to see the one and read the other. Gray was mortified because he had not a hundred pounds to bid for a curious library; and the Duchess of —— has immortalized herself by her liberality on that occasion, and by the handsome compliment she addressed to the poet, that 'if it afforded him any satisfaction, she had been more than paid, by her pleasure in reading the *Elegy in a Country Church-yard.*'

Literally and truly, one cannot get on well in the world without money. To be in want of money, is to pass through life with little credit or pleasure; it is to live out of the world, or to be despised if you come into it; it is not to be sent for to court, or asked out to dinner, or noticed in the street; it is not to have your opinion consulted or else rejected with contempt, to have your acquirements carped at and doubted, your good things disparaged, and at last to lose the wit and the spirit to say them; it is to be scrutinized by strangers, and neglected by friends; it is to be a thrall to circumstances, an exile in a foreign land; to forego leisure, freedom, ease of body and mind, to be dependent on the good-will and caprice of others, or earn a precarious and irksome livelihood by some laborious employment: it is to be compelled to stand behind a counter, or to sit at a desk in some public office, or to marry your landlady, or not the person you would wish; or to go out to the East or West-Indies, or to get a situation as judge abroad, and return home with a liver-complaint; or to be a law-stationer, or a scrivener or scavenger, or newspaper reporter; or to read law and sit in court without a brief, or be deprived of the use of your fingers by transcribing Greek manuscripts, or to be a seal engraver and pore yourself blind; or to go upon the stage, or try some of the Fine Arts; with all your pains, anxiety, and hopes, most probably to fail, or, if you succeed, after the exertions of years, and undergoing constant distress of mind and fortune, to be assailed on every side with envy, back-biting, and falsehood, or to be a favourite with the public for awhile, and then thrown into the back-ground—or a jail, by the fickleness of taste and some new favourite; to be full of enthusiasm and extravagance in youth, of chagrin and disappointment in after-life; to be jostled by the rabble because you do not ride in your coach, or avoided by those who know your worth and shrink from it as a claim on their respect or their purse; to be a burden to your relations, or unable to do any thing for them; to be ashamed to venture into crowds; to have cold comfort at home; to lose by degrees your confidence and any talent you might possess; to grow crabbed, morose, and querulous, dis satisfied with every one, but most so with yourself; and plagued out of your life, to look about for a place to die in, and quit the world without any one's asking after your will. The *wiseacres* will possibly, however, crowd round your coffin, and raise a monument at a considerable expense, and after a lapse of time, to commemorate your genius and your misfortunes!

The only reason why I am disposed to envy the professions of the church or army is, that men can afford to be poor in them without being subjected to insult. A girl with a handsome fortune in a country town may marry a poor lieutenant without degrading herself. An officer is always a gentleman; a clergyman is something more. Echard's book *On the Contempt of the Clergy* is unfounded. It is urely sufficient for any set of individuals, raised above actual want, hat their characters are not merely respectable, but sacred. Poverty, when it is voluntary, is never despicable, but takes an heroical aspect. What are the begging friars? Have they not put their base feet upon the necks of princes? Money as a luxury is valuable only as a passport to respect. It is one instrument of power. Where there are ther admitted and ostensible claims to this, it becomes superfluous, nd the neglect of it is even admired and looked up to as a mark of uperiority over it. Even a strolling beggar is a popular character, who makes an open profession of his craft and calling, and who is either worth a doit nor in want of one. The Scotch are proverbally poor and proud: we know they can remedy their poverty when they set about it. No one is sorry for them. The French migrants were formerly peculiarly situated in England. The priests were obnoxious to the common people on account of their religion; oth they and the nobles, for their politics. Their poverty and dirt ubjected them to many rebuffs; but their privations being voluntarily ncurred, and also borne with the characteristic patience and goodumour of the nation, screened them from contempt. I little thought, when I used to meet them walking out in the summer's-evenings at omers' Town, in their long great-coats, their beards covered with nuff, and their eyes gleaming with mingled hope and regret in the ays of the setting sun, and regarded them with pity bordering on espect, as the last filmy vestige of the ancient regime, as shadows of oyalty and superstition still flitting about the earth and shortly to isappear from it for ever, that they would one day return over the leeding corpse of their country, and sit like harpies, a polluted iumph, over the tomb of human liberty! To be a lord, a papist, nd poor, is perhaps to some temperaments a consummation devoutly o be wished. There is all the subdued splendour of external rank, he pride of self-opinion, irritated and goaded on by petty privations and vulgar obloquy to a degree of morbid acuteness. Private and public annoyances must perpetually remind him of what he is, of what his ancestors were (a circumstance which might otherwise be forgotten); must narrow the circle of conscious dignity more and more, and the sense of personal worth and pretension must be exalted by habit and contrast into a refined abstraction—'pure in the last recesses of the mind'—unmixed with, or unalloyed by 'baser matter!'—It was an hypothesis of the late Mr. Thomas Wedgewood, that there is a principle of compensation in the human mind which equalizes all situations, and by which the absence of any thing only gives us a more intense and intimate perception of the reality; that insult adds to pride, that pain looks forward to ease with delight, that hunger already enjoys the unsavoury morsel that is to save it from perishing; that want is surrounded with imaginary riches, like the poor poet in Hogarth, who has a map of the mines of Peru hanging on his garret walls; in short, that 'we can hold a fire in our hand by thinking on the frosty Caucasus'—but this hypothesis, though ingenious and to a certain point true, is to be admitted only in a limited and qualified sense.

There are two classes of people that I have observed who are not so distinct as might be imagined—those who cannot keep their own money in their hands, and those who cannot keep their hands from other people's. The first are always in want of money, though they do not know what they do with it. They *muddle* it away, without method or object, and without having any thing to show for it. They have not, for instance, a fine house, but they hire two houses at a time; they have not a hot-house in their garden, but a shrubbery within doors; they do not gamble, but they purchase a library, and dispose of it when they move house. A princely benefactor provides them with lodgings, where, for a time, you are sure to find them at home: and they furnish them in a handsome style for those who are to come after them. With all this sieve-like economy, they can only afford a leg of mutton and a bottle of wine, and are glad to get a lift in a common stage; whereas with a little management and the same disbursements, they might entertain a round of company and drive a smart tilbury. But they set no value upon money, and throw it away on any object or in any manner that first presents itself, merely to have it off their hands, so that you wonder what has become of it. The second class above spoken of not only make away with what belongs to themselves, but you cannot keep any thing you have from their rapacious grasp. If you refuse to lend them what you want, they insist that you *must*: if you let them have any thing to take charge of for a time (a print or a bust) they swear that you have given it them, and that they have too great a regard for the donor ever to part with it. You express surprise at their having run so largely in debt; but where is the singularity while others continue to lend? And how is this to be helped, when the manner of these sturdy beggars amounts to dragooning you out of your money, and they will not go away without your purse, any more than if they came with a pistol in their hand? If a person has no delicacy, he has you in his power, for you necessarily feel some towards him; and since he will take no denial, you must comply with his peremptory demands, or send for a constable, which out of respect for his character you will not do. These persons are also poor—*light come, light go*—and the bubble bursts at last. Yet if they had employed the same time and pains in any laudable art or study that they have in raising a surreptitious livelihood, they would have been respectable, if not rich. It is their facility in borrowing money that has ruined them. No one will set heartily to work, who has the face to enter a strange house, ask the master of it for a considerable oan, on some plausible and pompous pretext, and walk off with it in his pocket. You might as well suspect a highway-man of addicting himself to hard study in the intervals of his profession.

There is only one other class of persons I can think of, in connexion with the subject of this Essay—those who are always in want of money from the want of spirit to make use of it. Such persons are perhaps more to be pitied than all the rest. They live in want, n the midst of plenty—dare not touch what belongs to them, are afraid to say that their soul is their own, have their wealth locked up from them by fear and meanness as effectually as by bolts and bars, carcely allow themselves a coat to their backs or a morsel to eat, are n dread of coming to the parish all their lives, and are not sorry when they die, to think that they shall no longer be an expense to themselves—according to the old epigram:

'Here lies Father Clarges,
Who died to save charges!'

ON THE FEELING OF IMMORTALITY IN YOUTH

The Monthly Magazine.] [*March*, 1827.

'Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us.'
—SIR THOMAS BROWN.

No young man believes he shall ever die. It was a saying of my rother's, and a fine one. There is a feeling of Eternity in youth, which makes us amends for every thing. To be young is to be as one of the Immortal Gods. One half of time indeed is flown—th other half remains in store for us with all its countless treasures; f there is no line drawn, and we see no limit to our hopes and wishe We make the coming age our own.——

> 'The vast, the unbounded prospect lies before us.'

Death, old age, are words without a meaning, that pass by us like t idle air which we regard not. Others may have undergone, or ma still be liable to them—we 'bear a charmed life,' which laughs t scorn all such sickly fancies. As in setting out on a delightful jou ney, we strain our eager gaze forward——

> 'Bidding the lovely scenes at distance hail,'—

and see no end to the landscape, new objects presenting themselves we advance; so, in the commencement of life, we set no bounds t our inclinations, nor to the unrestricted opportunities of gratifyin them. We have as yet found no obstacle, no disposition to flag; an it seems that we can go on so for ever. We look round in a ne world, full of life, and motion, and ceaseless progress; and feel i ourselves all the vigour and spirit to keep pace with it, and do no foresee from any present symptoms how we shall be left behind in th natural course of things, decline into old age, and drop into the grave It is the simplicity, and as it were *abstractedness* of our feelings i youth, that (so to speak) identifies us with nature, and (our exper ence being slight and our passions strong) deludes us into a belief o being immortal like it. Our short-lived connection with existence we fondly flatter ourselves, is an indissoluble and lasting union— honey-moon that knows neither coldness, jar, nor separation. A infants smile and sleep, we are rocked in the cradle of our waywar fancies, and lulled into security by the roar of the universe around u —we quaff the cup of life with eager haste without draining it instead of which it only overflows the more—objects press aroun us, filling the mind with their magnitude and with the throng o desires that wait upon them, so that we have no room for th thoughts of death. From that plenitude of our being, we canno change all at once to dust and ashes, we cannot imagine 'this sen sible, warm motion, to become a kneaded clod'—we are too muc dazzled by the brightness of the waking dream around us to loo into the darkness of the tomb. We no more see our end than ou beginning: the one is lost in oblivion and vacancy, as the other hid from us by the crowd and hurry of approaching events. Or th grim shadow is seen lingering in the horizon, which we are doome never to overtake, or whose last, faint, glimmering outline touche upon Heaven and translates us to the skies! Nor would the hold that life has taken of us permit us to detach our thoughts from present objects and pursuits, even if we would. What is there more opposed to health, than sickness; to strength and beauty, than decay and dissolution; to the active search of knowledge than mere oblivion? Or is there none of the usual advantage to bar the approach of Death, and mock his idle threats; Hope supplies their place, and draws a veil over the abrupt termination of all our cherished schemes. While the spirit of youth remains unimpaired, ere the 'wine of life is drank up,' we are like people intoxicated or in a fever, who are hurried away by the violence of their own sensations: it is only as present objects begin to pall upon the sense, as we have been disappointed in our favourite pursuits, cut off from our closest ties, that passion loosens its hold upon the breast, that we by degrees become weaned from the world, and allow ourselves to contemplate, 'as in a glass, darkly,' the possibility of parting with it for good. The example of others, the voice of experience, has no effect upon us whatever. Casualties we must avoid: the slow and deliberate advances of age we can play at *hide-and-seek* with. We think ourselves too lusty and too nimble for that blear-eyed decrepid old gentleman to catch us. Like the foolish fat scullion, in Sterne, when she hears that Master Bobby is dead, our only reflection is—'So am not I!' The idea of death, instead of staggering our confidence, rather seems to strengthen and enhance our possession and our enjoyment of life. Others may fall around us like leaves, or be mowed down like flowers by the scythe of Time: these are but tropes and figures to the unreflecting ears and overweening presumption of youth. It is not till we see the flowers of Love, Hope, and Joy, withering around us, and our own pleasures cut up by the roots, that we bring the moral home to ourselves, that we abate something of the wanton extravagance of our pretensions, or that the emptiness and dreariness of the prospect before us reconciles us to the stillness of the grave!

'Life! thou strange thing, that hast a power to feel
Thou art, and to perceive that others are.'[1]

Well might the poet begin his indignant invective against an art, whose professed object is its destruction, with this animated apostrophe to life. Life is indeed a strange gift, and its privileges are most miraculous. Nor is it singular that when the splendid boon is first granted us, our gratitude, our admiration, and our delight should prevent us from reflecting on our own nothingness, or from thinking it will ever be recalled. Our first and strongest impressions are taken from the mighty scene that is opened to us, and we very innocently transfer its durability as well as magnificence to ourselves. So newly found, we cannot make up our minds to parting with it yet and at least put off that consideration to an indefinite term. Like a clown at a fair, we are full of amazement and rapture, and have no thoughts of going home, or that it will soon be night. We know our existence only from external objects, and we measure it by them. We can never be satisfied with gazing; and nature will still want us to look on and applaud. Otherwise, the sumptuous entertainment, 'the feast of reason and the flow of soul,' to which they were invited, seems little better than a mockery and a cruel insult. We do not go from a play till the scene is ended, and the lights are ready to be extinguished. But the fair face of things still shines on; shall we be called away, before the curtain falls, or ere we have scarce had a glimpse of what is going on? Like children, our step-mother Nature holds us up to see the raree-show of the universe; and then, as if life were a burthen to support, lets us instantly down again. Yet in that short interval, what 'brave sublunary things' does not the spectacle unfold; like a bubble, at one minute reflecting the universe, and the next, shook to air!—To see the golden sun and the azure sky, the outstretched ocean, to walk upon the green earth, and to be lord of a thousand creatures, to look down giddy precipices or over distant flowery vales, to see the world spread out under one's finger in a map, to bring the stars near, to view the smallest insects in a microscope, to read history, and witness the revolutions of empires and the succession of generations, to hear of the glory of Sidon and Tyre, of Babylon and Susa, as of a faded pageant, and to say all these were, and are now nothing, to think that we exist in such a point of time, and in such a corner of space, to be at once spectators and a part of the moving scene, to watch the return of the seasons, of spring and autumn, to hear

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[1] Fawcett's ART OF WAR, a poem, 1794.

> ——'The stockdove plain amid the forest deep,
> That drowsy rustles to the sighing gale'——

to traverse desert wildernesses, to listen to the midnight choir, to visit lighted halls, or plunge into the dungeon's gloom, or sit in crowded theatres and see life itself mocked, to feel heat and cold, pleasure and pain, right and wrong, truth and falsehood, to study the works of ar and refine the sense of beauty to agony, to worship fame and to drea of immortality, to have read Shakspeare and belong to the same species as Sir Isaac Newton;[1] to be and to do all this, and then in a moment to be nothing, to have it all snatched from one like a juggler's ball or a phantasmagoria; there is something revolting and incredible to sense in the transition, and no wonder that, aided by youth and warm blood, and the flush of enthusiasm, the mind contrives for a long time to reject it with disdain and loathing as a monstrous and improbable fiction, like a monkey on a house-top, that is loath, amidst its fine discoveries and specious antics, to be tumbled head-long into the street, and crushed to atoms, the sport and laughter of the multitude!

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[1] Lady Wortley Montague says, in one of her letters, that 'she would muc rather be a rich *effendi*, with all his ignorance, than Sir Isaac Newton, with all hi

The change, from the commencement to the close of life, appears like a fable, after it has taken place; how should we treat it otherwise than as a chimera before it has come to pass? There are some things that happened so long ago, places or persons we have formerly

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knowledge.' This was not perhaps an impolitic choice, as she had a better chance of becoming one than the other, there being many rich effendis to one Sir Isaac Newton. The wish was not a very intellectual one. The same petulance of rank and sex breaks out every where in these "*Letters*." She is constantly reducing the poets or philosophers who have the misfortune of her acquaintance, to the figure they might make at her Ladyship's levee or toilette, not considering that the public mind does not sympathize with this process of a fastidious imagination. In the same spirit, she declares of Pope and Swift, that 'had it not been for the *good-nature* of mankind, these two superior beings were entitled, by their birth and hereditary fortune, to be only a couple of link-boys.' Gulliver's Travels, and the Rape of the Lock, go for nothing in this critical estimate, and the world raised the authors to the rank of superior beings, in spite of their disadvantages of birth and fortune, *out of pure good-nature!* So, again, she says of Richardson, that he had never got beyond the servants' hall, and was utterly unfit to describe the manners of people of quality; till in the capricious workings of her vanity, she persuades herself that Clarissa is very like what she was at her age, and that Sir Thomas and Lady Grandison strongly resembled what she had heard of her mother and remembered of her father. It is one of the beauties and advantages of literature, that it is the means of abstracting the mind from the narrowness of local and personal prejudices, and of enabling us to judge of truth and excellence by their inherent merits alone. Woe be to the pen that would undo this fine illusion (the only reality), and teach us to regulate our notions of genius and virtue by the circumstances in which they happen to be placed! You would not expect a person whom you saw in a servants' hall, or behind a counter, to write Clarissa; but after he had written the work, to *pre-judge* it from the situation of the writer, is an unpardonable piece of injustice and folly. His merit could only be the greater from the contrast. If literature is an elegant accomplishment, which none but persons of birth and fashion should be allowed to excel in, or to exercise with advantage to the public, let them by all means take upon them the task of enlightening and refining mankind: if they decline this responsibility as too heavy for their shoulders, let those who do the drudgery in their stead, however inadequately, for want of their polite example, receive the meed that is their due, and not be treated as low pretenders who have encroached on the province of their betters. Suppose Richardson to have been acquainted with the great man's steward, or valet, instead of the great man himself, I will venture to say that there was more difference between him who lived in an *ideal world*, and had the genius and felicity to open that world to others, and his friend the steward, than between the seen, of which such dim traces remain, we hardly know whether was sleeping or waking they occurred; they are like dreams withi the dream of life, a mist, a film before the eye of memory, which, a we try to recall them more distinctly, elude our notice altogether It is but natural that the lone interval that we thus look back upo should have appeared long and endless in prospect. There are other so distinct and fresh, they seem but of yesterday—their very vivi ness might be deemed a pledge of their permanence. Then, howeve far back our impressions may go, we find others still older (for ou years are multiplied in youth); descriptions of scenes that we ha read, and people before our time, Priam and the Trojan war; an even then, Nestor was old and dwelt delighted on his youth, an

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lacquey and the mere lord, or between those who lived in different rooms of th same house, who dined on the same luxuries at different tables, who rode outsid or inside of the same coach, and were proud of wearing or of bestowing the sam tawdry livery. If the lord is distinguished from his valet by any thing else, it by education and talent, which he has in common with our author. But if th latter shews these in the highest degree, it is asked what are his pretensions Not birth or fortune, for neither of these would enable him to write a Clarissa One man is born with a title and estate, another with genius. That is sufficient and we have no right to question the genius for want of the *gentility*, unless th former ran in families, or could be bequeathed with a fortune, which is not th case. Were it so, the flowers of literature, like jewels and embroidery, would b confined to the fashionable circles; and there would be no pretenders to taste o elegance but those whose names were found in the court list. No one objects t Claude's Landscapes as the work of a pastrycook, or withholds from Raphael th epithet of *divine*, because his parents were not rich. This impertinence is confine to men of letters; the evidence of the senses baffles the envy and foppery of mankind. No quarter ought to be given to this *aristocratic* tone of criticism wheneve it appears. People of quality are not contented with carrying all the externa advantages for their own share, but would persuade you that all the intellectua ones are packed up in the same bundle. Lord Byron was a later instance of thi double and unwarrantable style of pretension—*monstrum ingens, biforme.* He coul not endure a lord who was not a wit, nor a poet who was not a lord. Nobod but himself answered to his own standard of perfection. Mr. Moore carries proxy in his pocket from some noble persons to estimate literary merit by th same rule. Lady Mary calls Fielding names, but she afterwards makes atonemen by doing justice to his frank, free, hearty nature, where she says 'his spirits gav him raptures with his cook-maid, and cheerfulness when he was starving in garret, and his happy constitution made him forget every thing when he was place before a venison-pasty or over a flask of champagne.' She does not wan shrewdness and spirit when her petulance and conceit do not get the better of he and she has done ample and merited execution on Lord Bolingbroke. She is however, very angry at the freedoms taken with the Great; *smells a rat* in thi indiscriminate scribbling, and the familiarity of writers with the reading public and inspired by her Turkish costume, foretells a French or English revolution a the consequence of transferring the patronage of letters from the *quality* to th mob, and of supposing that ordinary writers or readers can have any notions i common with their superiors.

spoke of the race, of heroes that were no more;—what wonder that, seeing this long line of being pictured in our minds, and reviving as it were in us, we should give ourselves involuntary credit for an indeterminate period of existence? In the Cathedral at Peterborough there is a monument to Mary, Queen of Scots, at which I used to gaze when a boy, while the events of the period, all that had happened since, passed in review before me. If all this mass of feeling and imagination could be crowded into a moment's compass, what might not the whole of life be supposed to contain? We are heirs of the past; we count upon the future as our natural reversion. Besides, there are some of our early impressions so exquisitely tempered, it appears that they must always last—nothing can add to or take away from their sweetness and purity—the first breath of spring, the hyacinth dipped in the dew, the mild lustre of the evening-star, the rainbow after a storm—while we have the full enjoyment of these, we must be young; and what can ever alter us in this respect? Truth, friendship, love, books, are also proof against the canker of time; and while we live, but for them, we can never grow old. We take out a new lease of existence from the objects on which we set our affections, and become abstracted, impassive, immortal in them. We cannot conceive how certain sentiments should ever decay or grow cold in our breasts; and, consequently, to maintain them in their first youthful glow and vigour, the flame of life must continue to burn as bright as ever, or rather, they are the fuel that feed the sacred lamp, that kindle 'the purple light of love,' and spread a golden cloud around our heads! Again, we not only flourish and survive in our affections (in which we will not listen to the possibility of a change, any more than we foresee the wrinkles on the brow of a mistress), but we have a farther guarantee against the thoughts of death in our favourite studies and pursuits, and in their continual advance. Art we know is long; life, we feel, should be so too. We see no end of the difficulties we have to encounter: perfection is slow of attainment, and we must have time to accomplish it in. Rubens complained that when he had just learnt his art, he was snatched away from it: we trust we shall be more fortunate! A wrinkle in an old head takes whole days to finish it properly: but to catch 'the Raphael grace, the Guido air,' no limit should be put to our endeavours. What a prospect for the future! What a task we have entered upon! and shall we be arrested in the middle of it? We do not reckon our time thus employed lost, or our pains thrown away, or our progress slow—we do not droop or grow tired, but 'gain new vigour at our endless task;'—and shall Time grudge us the opportunity to finish what we have auspiciously begun, and have formed a sort of compact with nature to achieve? The fame of the great names we look up to is also imperishable; and shall not we, who contemplate it with such intense yearnings, imbibe a portion of ethereal fire, the *divinæ particulæ auræ*, which nothing can extinguish? I remember to have looked at a print of Rembrandt for hours together, without being conscious of the flight of time, trying to resolve it into its component parts, to connect its strong and sharp gradations, to learn the secret of its reflected lights, and found neither satiety nor pause in the prosecution of my studies. The print over which I was poring would last long enough; why should the idea in my mind, which was finer, more impalpable, perish before it? At this, I redoubled the ardour of my pursuit, and by the very subtlety and refinement of my inquiries, seemed to bespeak for them an exemption from corruption and the rude grasp of Death.[1]

Objects, on our first acquaintance with them, have that singleness and integrity of impression that it seems as if nothing could destroy or obliterate them, so firmly are they stamped and rivetted on the brain. We repose on them with a sort of voluptuous indolence, in full faith and boundless confidence. We are absorbed in the present moment, or return to the same point—idling away a great deal of time in youth, thinking we have enough and to spare. There is often a local feeling in the air, which is as fixed as if it were of marble; we loiter in dim cloisters, losing ourselves in thought and in their glimmering arches; a winding road before us seems as long as the journey of life, and as full of events. Time and experience dissipate this illusion; and by reducing them to detail, circumscribe the limits of our expectations. It is only as the pageant of life passes by and the masques turn their backs upon us, that we see through the deception, or believe that the train will have an end. In many cases, the slow progress and monotonous texture of our lives, before we mingle with the world and are embroiled in its affairs, has a tendency to aid the same feeling. We have a difficulty, when left to ourselves, and without the resource of books or some more lively pursuit, to 'beguile the slow and creeping hours of time,' and argue that if it moves on always at this tedious snail's-pace, it can never come to an end. We are willing to skip over certain portions of it that separate us from favourite objects, that irritate ourselves at the unnecessary delay. The young are prodigal of life from a superabundance of it; the old are tenacious on the same score, because they have little left, and cannot enjoy even what remains of it.

For my part, I set out in life with the French Revolution, and that event had considerable influence on my early feelings, as on those of others. Youth was then doubly such. It was the dawn of a new era, a new impulse had been given to men's minds, and the sun of Liberty rose upon the sun of Life in the same day, and both were proud to run their race together. Little did I dream, while my first hopes and wishes went hand in hand with those of the human race, that long before my eyes should close, that dawn would be overcast, and set once more in the night of despotism—'total eclipse!' Happy that I did not. I felt for years, and during the best part of my existence, *heart-whole* in that cause, and triumphed in the triumphs over the enemies of man! At that time, while the fairest aspirations of the human mind seemed about to be realized, ere the image of man was defaced and his breast mangled in scorn, philosophy took a higher, poetry could afford a deeper range. At that time, to read the 'ROBBERS,' was indeed delicious, and to hear

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[1] Is it not this that frequently keeps artists alive so long, *viz.* the constant occupation of their minds with vivid images, with little of the *wear-and-tear* of the body?

> 'From the dungeon of the tower time-rent,
> That fearful voice, a famish'd father's cry,'

could be borne only amidst the fulness of hope, the crash of the fall of the strong holds of power, and the exulting sounds of the march of human freedom. What feelings the death-scene in Don Carlos sent into the soul! In that headlong career of lofty enthusiasm, and the joyous opening of the prospects of the world and our own, the thought of death crossing it, smote doubly cold upon the mind; there was a stifling sense of oppression and confinement, an impatience of our present knowledge, a desire to grasp the whole of our existence in one strong embrace, to sound the mystery of life and death, and in order to put an end to the agony of doubt and dread, to burst through our prison-house, and confront the King of Terrors in his grisly palace! . . . As I was writing out this passage, my miniature-picture when a child lay on the mantle-piece, and I took it out of the case to look at it. I could perceive few traces of myself in it; but there was the same placid brow, the dimpled mouth, the same timid, inquisitive glance as ever. But its careless smile did not seem to reproach me with having become a recreant to the sentiments that were then sown in my mind, or with having written a sentence that could call up a blush in this image of ingenuous youth!

'That time is past with all its giddy raptures.' Since the future was barred to my progress, I have turned for consolation to the past, gathering up the fragments of my early recollections, and putting them into a form that might live. It is thus, that when we find our personal and substantial identity vanishing from us, we strive to gain a reflected and substituted one in our thoughts: we do not like to perish wholly, and wish to bequeath our names at least to posterity. As long as we can keep alive our cherished thoughts and nearest interests in the minds of others, we do not appear to have retired altogether from the stage, we still occupy a place in the estimation of mankind, exercise a powerful influence over them, and it is only our bodies that are trampled into dust or dispersed to air. Our darling speculations still find favour and encouragement, and we make as good a figure in the eyes of our descendants, nay, perhaps, a better than we did in our life-time. This is one point gained; the demands of our self-love are so far satisfied. Besides, if by the proofs of intellectual superiority we survive ourselves in this world, by exemplary virtue or unblemished faith, we are taught to ensure an interest in another and a higher state of being, and to anticipate at the same time the applauses of men and angels.

'Even from the tomb the voice of nature cries;
Even in our ashes live their wonted fires.'

As we advance in life, we acquire a keener sense of the value of time Nothing else, indeed, seems of any consequence; and we become misers in this respect. We try to arrest its few last tottering steps, and to make it linger on the brink of the grave. We can never leave off wondering how that which has ever been should cease to be, and would still live on, that we may wonder at our own shadow, and when 'all the life of life is flown,' dwell on the retrospect of the past. This is accompanied by a mechanical tenaciousness of whatever we possess, by a distrust and a sense of fallacious hollowness in all we see. Instead of the full, pulpy feeling of youth, every thing is flat and insipid. The world is a painted witch, that puts us off with false shews and tempting appearances. The ease, the jocund gaiety, the unsuspecting security of youth are fled: nor can we, without flying in the face of common sense,

'From the last dregs of life, hope to receive
What its first sprightly runnings could not give.'

If we can slip out of the world without notice or mischance, can tamper with bodily infirmity, and frame our minds to the becoming composure of *still-life*, before we sink into total insensibility, it is as much as we ought to expect. We do not in the regular course of nature die all at once: we have mouldered away gradually long before; faculty after faculty, attachment after attachment, we are torn from ourselves piece-meal while living; year after year takes something from us; and death only consigns the last remnant of what we were to the grave. The revulsion is not so great, and a quiet *euthanasia* is a winding-up of the plot, that is not out of reason or nature.

That we should thus in a manner outlive ourselves, and dwindle imperceptibly into nothing, is not surprising, when even in our prime the strongest impressions leave so little traces of themselves behind, and the last object is driven out by the succeeding one. How little effect is produced on us at any time by the books we have read, the scenes we have witnessed, the sufferings we have gone through! Think only of the variety of feelings we experience in reading an interesting romance, or being present at a fine play—what beauty, what sublimity, what soothing, what heart-rending emotions! You would suppose these would last for ever, or at least subdue the mind to a correspondent tone and harmony—while we turn over the page, while the scene is passing before us, it seems as if nothing could ever after shake our resolution, that 'treason domestic, foreign levy, nothing could touch us farther!' The first splash of mud we get, on entering the street, the first pettifogging shop-keeper that cheats us out of twopence, and the whole vanishes clean out of our remembrance, and we become the idle prey of the most petty and annoying circumstances. The mind soars by an effort to the grand and lofty: it is at home, in the grovelling, the disagreeable, and the little. This happens in the height and hey-day of our existence, when novelty gives a stronger impulse to the blood and takes a faster hold of the brain, (I have known the impression on coming out of a gallery of pictures then last half a day)—as we grow old, we become more feeble and querulous, every object 'reverbs its own hollowness,' and both worlds are not enough to satisfy the peevish importunity and extravagant presumption of our desires! There are a few superior, happy beings, who are born with a temper exempt from every trifling annoyance. This spirit sits serene and smiling as in its native skies, and a divine harmony (whether heard or not) plays around them. This is to be at peace. Without this, it is in vain to fly into deserts, or to build a hermitage on the top of rocks, if regret and ill-humour follow us there: and with this, it is needless to make the experiment. The only true retirement is that of the heart; the only true leisure is the repose of the passions. To such persons it makes little difference whether they are young or old; and they die as they have lived, with graceful resignation.

ON READING NEW BOOKS

The Monthly Magazine.] [*July*, 1827.

'And what of this new book, that the whole world make such a rout about?'—STERNE.

I CANNOT understand the rage manifested by the greater part of the world for reading New Books. If the public had read all those that have gone before, I can conceive how they should not wish to read the same work twice over; but when I consider the countless volumes that lie unopened, unregarded, unread, and unthought-of, I cannot enter into the pathetic complaints that I hear made, that Sir Walter writes no more—that the press is idle—that Lord Byron is dead. If I have not read a book before, it is, to all intents and purposes, new to me, whether it was printed yesterday or three hundred years ago. If it be urged that it has no modern, passing incidents, and is out of date and old-fashioned, then it is so much the newer; it is farther removed from other works that I have lately read, from the familiar routine of ordinary life, and makes so much more addition to my knowledge. But many people would as soon think of putting on old armour, as of taking up a book not published within the last month, or year at the utmost. There is a fashion in reading as well as in dress, which lasts only for the season. One would imagine that books were, like women, the worse for being old;[1] that they have a pleasure in being read for the first time; that they open their leaves more cordially; that the spirit of enjoyment wears out with the spirit of novelty; and that, after a certain age, it is high time to put them on the shelf. This conceit seems to be followed up in practice. What is it to me that another—that hundreds or thousands have in all ages read a work? Is it on this account the less likely to give me pleasure, because it has delighted so many others? Or can I taste this pleasure by proxy? Or am I in any degree the wiser for their knowledge? Yet this might appear to be the inference. *Their* having read the work may be said to act upon us by sympathy, and the knowledge which so many other persons have of its contents deadens our curiosity and interest altogether. We set aside the subject as one on which others have made up their minds for us (as if we really could have ideas in their heads), and are quite on the alert for the next new work, teeming hot from the press, which we shall be the first to read, criticise, and pass an opinion on. Oh, delightful! To cut open the leaves, to inhale the fragrance of the scarcely dry paper, to examine the type, to see who is the printer (which is some clue to the value that is set upon the work), to launch out into regions of thought and invention never trod till now, and to explore characters that never met a human eye before—this is a luxury worth sacrificing a dinner-party, or a few hours of a spare morning to. Who, indeed, when the work is critical and full of expectation, would venture to dine out, or to face a coterie of blue-stockings in the evening, without having gone through this ordeal, or at least without hastily turning over a few of the first pages, while dressing, to be able to say that the beginning does not promise much, or to tell the name of the heroine?

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[1] 'Laws are not like women, the worse for being old.'—*The Duke of Buckingham's Speech in the House of Lords, in Charles the Second's time.*

A new work is something in our power: we mount the bench, and sit in judgment on it: we can damn or recommend it to others at pleasure, can decry or extol it to the skies, and can give an answer to those who have not yet read it and expect an account of it; and thus shew our shrewdness and the independence of our taste before the world have had time to form an opinion. If we cannot write ourselves, we become, by busying ourselves about it, a kind of *accessaries after the fact.* Though not the parent of the bantling that 'has just come into this breathing world, scarce half made up,' without the aid of criticism and puffing, yet we are the gossips and foster-nurses on the occasion, with all the mysterious significance and self-importance of the tribe. If we wait, we must take our report from others; if we make haste, we may dictate our's to them. It is not a race, then, for priority of information, but for precedence in tattling and dogmatising. The work last out is the first that people talk and inquire about. It is the subject on the *tapis*—the cause that is pending. It is the last candidate for success (other claims have been disposed of), and appeals for this success to us, and us alone. Our predecessors can have nothing to say to this question, however they may have anticipated us on others; future ages, in all probability, will not trouble their heads about it; we are the panel. How hard, then, not to avail ourselves of our immediate privilege to give sentence of life or death—to seem in ignorance of what every one else is full of—to be behind-hand with the polite, the knowing, and fashionable part of mankind—to be at a loss and dumb-founded, when all around us are in their glory, and figuring away, on no other ground than that of having read a work that we have not! Books that are to be written hereafter cannot be criticised by us; those that were written formerly have been criticised long ago: but a new book is the property, the prey of ephemeral criticism, which it darts triumphantly upon; there is a raw thin air of ignorance and uncertainty about it, not filled up by any recorded opinion; and curiosity, impertinence, and vanity rush eagerly into the vacuum. A new book is the fair field for petulance and coxcombry to gather laurels in—the but set up for roving opinion to aim at. Can we wonder, then, that the circulating libraries are beseiged by literary dowagers and their grand-daughters, when a new novel is announced? That Mail-Coach copies of the Edinburgh Review are or were coveted? That the Manuscript of the Waverley romances is sent abroad in time for the French, German, or even Italian translation to appear on the same day as the original work, so that the longing Continental public may not be kept waiting an instant longer than their fellow-readers in the English metropolis, which would be as tantalising and insupportable as a little girl being kept without her new frock, when her sister's is just come home and is the talk and admiration of every one in the house? To be sure, there is something in the taste of the times; a modern work is expressly adapted to modern readers. It appeals to our direct experience, and to well-known subjects; it is part and parcel of the world around us, and is drawn from the same sources as our daily thoughts. There is, therefore, so far, a natural or habitual sympathy between us and the literature of the day, though this is a different consideration from the mere circumstance of novelty. An author now alive has a right to calculate upon the living public: he cannot count upon the dead, nor look forward with much confidence to those that are unborn. Neither, however, is it true that we are eager to read all new books alike: we turn from them with a certain feeling of distaste and distrust, unless they are recommended to us by some peculiar feature or obvious distinction. Only young ladies from the boarding-school, or milliners' girls, read all the new novels that come out. It must be spoken of or against; the writer's name must be well known or a great secret; it must be a topic of discourse and a mark for criticism—that is, it must be likely to bring us into notice in some way—or we take no notice of it. There is a mutual and tacit understanding on this head. We can no more read all the new books that appear, than we can read all the old ones that have disappeared from time to time. A question may be started here, and pursued as far as needful, whether, if an old and worm-eaten Manuscript were discovered at the present moment, it would be sought after with the same avidity as a new and hot-pressed poem, or other popular work? Not generally, certainly, though by a few with perhaps greater zeal. For it would not affect present interests, or amuse present fancies, or touch on present manners, or fall in with the public *egotism* in any way: it would be the work either of some obscure author—in which case it would want the principle of excitement; or of some illustrious name, whose style and manner would be already familiar to those most versed in the subject, and his fame established—so that, as a matter of comment and controversy, it would only go to account on the old score: there would be no room for learned feuds and heart-burnings. Was there not a Manuscript of Cicero's talked of as having been discovered about a year ago? But we have heard no more of it. There have been several other cases, more or less in point, in our time or near it. A Noble Lord (which may serve to shew at least the interest taken in books *not for being new*) some time ago gave 2000*l.* for a copy of the first edition of the Decameron: but did he read it? It has been a fashion also of late for noble and wealthy persons to go to a considerable expense in ordering reprints of the old Chronicles and black-letter works. Does not this rather prove that the books did not circulate very rapidly or extensively, or such extraordinary patronage and liberality would not have been necessary? Mr. Thomas Taylor, at the instance, I believe, of the old Duke of Norfolk, printed fifty copies in quarto of a translation of the works of Plato and Aristotle. He did not choose that a larger impression should be struck off, lest these authors should get into the hands of the vulgar. There was no danger of a run in that way. I tried to read some of the Dialogues in the translation of Plato, but, I confess, could make nothing of it: 'the logic was so different from ours!'[1] A startling experiment was made on this sort of retrospective curiosity, in the case of Ireland's celebrated Shakspeare forgery. The public there certainly manfested no backwardness nor lukewarmness: the enthusiasm was equal to the folly. But then the spirit exhibited on this occasion was partly critical and polemical, and it is a problem whether an actual and undoubted play of Shakspeare's would have excited the same ferment; and, on the other hand, Shakspeare is an essential modern. People read and go to see his real plays, as well as his pretended ones. The *fuss* made about Ossian is another test to refer to. It was its being the supposed revival of an old work (known only by scattered fragments or lingering tradition) which gave it its chief interest, though there was also a good deal of mystery and quackery concerned along with the din and stir of national jealousy and pretension. Who reads Ossian now? It is one of the reproaches brought against Buonaparte that he was fond of it when young. I cannot for myself see the objection. There is no doubt an antiquarian spirit always at work, and opposed to the spirit of novelty-hunting; but, though opposed, it is scarcely a match for it in a general and popular point of view. It is not long ago that I happened to be suggesting a new translation of Don Quixote to an enterprising bookseller; and his answer was,—'We want new Don Quixotes.' I believe I deprived the same active-minded person of a night's rest, by telling him there was the beginning of another novel by Goldsmith in existence. This, if it could be procured, would satisfy both tastes for the new and the old at once. I fear it is but a fragment, and that we must wait till a new Goldsmith appears. We may observe of late a strong craving after *Memoirs* and *Lives of the Dead.* But these, it may be remarked, savour so much of the real and familiar, that the persons described differ from us only in being dead, which is a reflection to our advantage: or, if remote and romantic in their interest and adventures, they require to be bolstered up in some measure by the embellishments of modern style and criticism. The accounts of Petrarch and Laura, of Abelard and Eloise, have a lusciousness and warmth in the subject which contrast quaintly and pointedly with the coldness of the grave; and, after all, we prefer Pope's Eloise and Abelard with the modern dress and flourishes, to the sublime and affecting simplicity of the original Letters.

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[1] An expression borrowed from a voluble German scholar, who gave this as an excuse for not translating the 'Critique of Pure Reason' into English. He might as well have said seriously, that the *Rule of Three* in German was different from our's. Mr. Taylor (the Platonist, as he was called) was a singular instance of a person in our time believing in the heathen mythology. He had a very beautiful wife. An impudent Frenchman, who came over to London, and lodged in the same house, made love to her, by pretending to worship her as Venus, and so thought to turn the tables on our philosopher. I once spent an evening with this gentleman at Mr. G. D.'s chambers, in Clifford's-inn, (where there was no exclusion of persons or opinions), and where we had pipes and tobacco, porter, and bread and cheese for supper. Mr. Taylor never smoked, never drank porter, and had an aversion to cheese. I remember he shewed with some triumph two of his fingers, which had been bent so that he had lost the use of them, in copying out the manuscripts of Proclus and Plotinus in a fine Greek hand. Such are the trophies of

In some very just and agreeable reflections on the story of Abelard

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human pride! It would be well if our deep studies often produced no other crookedness and deformity! I endeavoured (but in vain) to learn something from the heathen philosopher as to Plato's doctrine of abstract ideas being the foundation of particular ones, which I suspect has more truth in it than we moderns are willing to admit. Another friend of mine once breakfasted with Mr. D. (the most amiable and absent of hosts), when there was no butter, no knife to cut the loaf with, and the tea-pot was without a spout. My friend after a few immaterial ceremonies, adjourned to Peel's coffee-house, close by, where he regaled himself on buttered toast, coffee, and the newspaper of the day (a newspaper possessed some interest when we were young); and the only interruption to his satisfaction was the fear that his host might suddenly enter, and be shocked at his imperfect hospitality. He would probably forget the circumstance altogether. I am afraid this veteran of the old school has not received many proofs of the *archaism* of the prevailing taste; and that the corrections in his History of the University of Cambridge, have cost him more than the public will ever repay him for.

and Eloise, in a late number of a contemporary publication, there is a quotation of some lines from Lucan, which Eloise is said to have repeated in broken accents as she was advancing to the altar to receive the veil:

> 'O maxime conjux!
> O thalamis indigne meis! Hoc juris habebat
> In tantum fortuna caput? Cur impia nupsi,
> Si miserum factura fui? Nunc accipe pœnas,
> Sed quas sponte luam.' *Pharsalia*, lib. 8.

This speech, quoted by another person, on such an occasion, might seem cold and pedantic; but from the mouth of the passionate and unaffected Eloise it cannot bear that interpretation. What sounding lines! What a pomp, and yet what a familiar boldness in their application—'proud as when blue Iris bends!' The reading this account brought forcibly to mind what has struck me often before—the unreasonableness of the complaint we constantly hear of the ignorance and barbarism of former ages, and the folly of restricting all refinement and literary elegance to our own. We are indeed, indebted to the ages that have gone before us, and could not well do without them. But in all ages there will be found still others that have gone before with nearly equal lustre and advantage, though by distance and the intervention of multiplied excellence, this lustre may be dimmed or forgotten. Had it then no existence? We might, with the same reason, suppose that the horizon is the last boundary and verge of the round earth. Still, as we advance, it recedes from us; and so time from its store-house pours out an endless succession of the productions of art and genius; and the farther we explore the obscurity, other trophies and other land-marks rise up. It is only our ignorance that fixes a limit—as the mist gathered round the mountain's brow makes us fancy we are treading the edge of the universe! Here was Heloise living at a period when monkish indolence and superstition were at their height—in one of those that are emphatically called the *dark ages*; and yet, as she is led to the altar to make her last fatal vow, expressing her feelings in language quite natural to her, but from which the most accomplished and heroic of our modern females would shrink back with pretty and affected wonder and affright. The glowing and impetuous lines which she murmured, as she passed on, with spontaneous and rising enthusiasm, were engraven on her heart, familiar to her as her daily thoughts; her mind must have been full of them to overflowing, and at the same time enriched with other stores and sources of knowledge equally elegant and impressive; and we persist, notwithstanding this and a thousand similar circumstances, in indulging our surprise how people could exist, and see, and feel, in those days, without having access to our opportunities and acquirements, and how Shakspeare wrote long after, *in a barbarous age*! The mystery in this case is of our own making. We are struck with astonishment at finding a fine moral sentiment or a noble image nervously expressed in an author of the age of Queen Elizabeth; not considering that, independently of nature and feeling, which are the same in all periods, the writers of that day, who were generally men of education and learning, had such models before them as the one that has been just referred to—were thoroughly acquainted with those masters of classic thought and language, compared with whom, in all that relates to the artificial graces of composition, the most studied of the moderns are little better than Goths and Vandals. It is true, we have lost sight of, and neglected the former, because the latter have, in a great degree, superseded them, as the elevations nearest to us intercept those farthest off; but our not availing ourselves of this vantage-ground is no reason why our forefathers should not (who had not our superfluity of choice), and most assuredly they did study and cherish the precious fragments of antiquity, collected together in their time, 'like sunken wreck and sumless treasuries;' and while they did this, we need be at no loss to account for any examples of grace, of force, or dignity in their writings, if these must always be traced back to a previous source. One age cannot understand how another could subsist without its lights, as one country thinks every other must be poor for want of its physical productions. This is a narrow and superficial view of the subject: we should by all means rise above it. I am not for devoting the whole of our time to the study of the classics, or of any other set of writers, to the exclusion and neglect of nature; but I think we should turn our thoughts enough that way to convince us of the existence of genius and learning before our time, and to cure us of an overweening conceit of ourselves, and of a contemptuous opinion of the world at large. Every civilised age and country (and of these there is not one, but a hundred) has its literature, its arts, its comforts, large and ample, though we may know nothing of them; nor is it (except for our own sakes) important that we should.

Books have been so multiplied in our days (like the Vanity Fair of knowledge), and we have made such progress beyond ourselves in some points, that it seems at first glance as if we had monopolised every possible advantage, and the rest of the world must be left destitute and in darkness. This is the *cockneyism* (with leave be it spoken) of the nineteenth century. There is a tone of smartness and piquancy in modern writing, to which former examples may, in one sense, appear flat and pedantic. Our allusions are more pointed and personal: the ancients are, in this respect, formal and prosaic personages. Some one, not long ago, in this vulgar, shallow spirit of criticism (which sees every thing from its own point of view), said that the tragedies of Sophocles and Æschylus were about as good as the pieces brought out at Sadler's Wells or the Adelphi Theatre. An oration of Demosthenes is thought dry and meagre, because it is not 'full of wise saws and modern instances:' one of Cicero's is objected to as flimsy and extravagant, for the same reason. There is a style in one age which does not fall in with the taste of the public in another, as it requires greater effeminacy and softness, greater severity or simplicity, greater force or refinement. Guido was more admired than Raphael in his day, because the manners were grown softer without the strength: Sir Peter Lely was thought in his to have eclipsed Vandyke—an opinion that no one holds at present: Holbein's faces must be allowed to be very different from Sir Thomas Lawrence's—yet the one was the favourite painter of Henry VIII., as the other is of George IV. What should we say in our time to the *euphuism* of the age of Elizabeth, when style was made a riddle, and the court talked in conundrums? This, as a novelty and a trial of the wits, might take for a while: afterwards, it could only seem absurd. We must always make some allowance for a change of style, which those who are accustomed to read none but works written within the last twenty years neither can nor will make. When a whole generation read, they will read none but contemporary productions. The taste for literature becomes superficial, as it becomes universal and is spread over a larger space. When ten thousand boarding-school girls, who have learnt to play on the harpsichord, are brought out in the same season, Rossini will be preferred to Mozart, as the last new composer. I remember a very genteel young couple in the boxes at Drury Lane being very much scandalised some years ago at the phrase in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*—'an insolent piece of paper'—applied to the contents of a letter—it wanted the modern lightness and indifference. Let an old book be ever so good, it treats (generally speaking) of topics that are stale in a style that has grown 'somewhat musty;' of manners that are exploded, probably by the very ridicule thus cast upon them; of persons that no longer figure on the stage; and of interests that have long since given place to others in the infinite fluctuations of human affairs. Longinus complains of the want of interest in the Odyssey, because it does not, like the Iliad, treat of war. The very complaint we make against the latter is that it treats of nothing else; or that, as Fuseli expresses it, every thing is seen 'through the blaze of war.'

Books of devotion are no longer read (if we read Irving's *Orations*, it is merely that we may go as a *lounge* to see the man): even attacks on religion are out of date and insipid. Voltaire's jests, and the *Jew's Letters* in answer (equal in wit, and more than equal in learning), repose quietly on the shelf together. We want something in England about Rent and the Poor-Laws, and something in France about the Charter—or Lord Byron. With the attempts, however, to revive superstition and intolerance, a spirit of opposition has been excited, and Pascall's *Provincial Letters* have been once more enlisted into the service. In France you meet with no one who has read the *New Heloise*: the *Princess of Cleves* is not even mentioned in these degenerate days. Is it not provoking with us to see the *Beggar's Opera* cut down to two acts, because some of the allusions are too broad, and others not understood? And in America—that Van Diemen's Land of letters—this sterling satire is hooted off the stage, because fortunately they have no such state of manners as it describes before their eyes; and because, unfortunately, they have no conception of any thing but what they see. America is singularly and awkwardly situated in this respect. It is a new country with an old language; and while every thing about them is of a day's growth, they are constantly applying to us to know what to think of it, and taking their opinions from our books and newspapers with a strange mixture of servility and of the spirit of contradiction. They are an independent state in politics: in literature they are still a colony from us—not out of their leading strings, and strangely puzzled how to determine between the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews. We have naturalised some of their writers, who had formed themselves upon us. This is at once a compliment to them and to ourselves. Amidst the scramble and lottery for fame in the present day, besides puffing, which may be regarded as the hot-bed of reputation, another mode has been attempted by *transplanting* it; and writers who are set down as drivellers at home, shoot up great authors on the other side of the water; pack up their all—a title-page and sufficient impudence; and a work, of which the *flocci-nauci-nihili-pili-fication*, in Shenstone's phrase, is well known to every competent judge, is *placarded* into eminence, and 'flames in the forehead of the morning sky' on the walls of Paris or St. Petersburgh. I dare not mention the instances, but so it is. Some reputations last only while the possessors live, from which one might suppose that they gave themselves a character for genius: others are cried up by their gossiping acquaintances, as long as they give dinners, and make their houses places of polite resort; and, in general, in our time, a book may be considered to have passed the ordeal that is mentioned at all three months after it is printed. Immortality is not even a dream—

a boy's conceit; and posthumous fame is no more regarded by the author than by his bookseller.[1]

This idle, dissipated turn seems to be a set-off to, or the obvious reaction of, the exclusive admiration of the ancients, which was formerly the fashion: as if the sun of human intellect rose and set at Rome and Athens, and the mind of man had never exerted itself to any purpose since. The ignorant, as well as the adept, were charmed only with what was obsolete and far-fetched, wrapped up in technical terms and in a learned tongue. Those who spoke and wrote a language which hardly any one at present even understood, must of course be wiser than we. Time, that brings so many reputations to decay, had embalmed others and rendered them sacred. From an implicit faith and overstrained homage paid to antiquity, we of the modern school have taken too strong a bias to what is new; and divide all wisdom and worth between ourselves and posterity,—not a very formidable rival to our self-love, as we attribute all its advantages to ourselves, though we pretend to owe little or nothing to our predecessors. About the time of the French Revolution, it was agreed that the world had hitherto been in its dotage or its infancy; and that Mr. Godwin, Condorcet, and others were to begin a new race of men—a new epoch in society. Every thing up to that period was to be set aside as puerile or barbarous; or, if there were any traces of thought and manliness now and then discoverable, they were to be regarded with wonder as prodigies—as irregular and fitful starts in that long sleep of reason and night of philosophy. In this liberal spirit Mr. Godwin composed an Essay, to prove that, till the publication of *The Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, no one knew how to write a word of common grammar, or a style that was not utterly uncouth, incongruous, and feeble. Addison, Swift, and Junius were included in this censure. The English language itself might be supposed to owe its stability and consistency, its roundness and polish, to the whirling motion of the French Revolution. Those who had gone before us were, like our grandfathers and grandmothers, decrepit, superannuated people, blind and dull; poor creatures, like flies in winter, without pith or marrow in them. The past was barren of interest—had neither thought nor object worthy to arrest our attention; and the future would be equally a senseless void, except as we projected ourselves and our theories into it. There is nothing I hate more than I do this exclusive, upstart spirit.

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[1] When a certain poet was asked if he thought Lord Byron's name would live three years after he was dead, he answered, 'Not three days, Sir!' This was premature: it has lasted above a year. His works have been translated into French, and there is a *Caffé Byron* on the Boulevards. Think of a *Caffé Wordsworth* on the Boulevards!

> 'By Heavens, I 'd rather be
> A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
> So might I, standing on some pleasant lea,
> Catch glimpses that might make me less forlorn,
> Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea,
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.'
>
> WORDSWORTH'S SONNETS.

Neither do I see the good of it even in a personal and interested point of view. By despising all that has preceded us, we teach others to despise ourselves. Where there is no established scale nor rooted faith in excellence, all superiority—our own as well as that of others—soon comes to the ground. By applying the wrong end of the magnifying-glass to all objects indiscriminately, the most respectable dwindle into insignificance, and the best are confounded with the worst. Learning, no longer supported by opinion, or genius by fame, is cast into the mire, and 'trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.' I would rather endure the most blind and bigotted respect for great and illustrious names, than that pitiful, grovelling humour which has no pride in intellectual excellence, and no pleasure but in decrying those who have given proofs of it, and reducing them to its own level. If, with the diffusion of knowledge, we do not gain an enlargement and elevation of views, where is the benefit? If, by tearing asunder names from things, we do not leave even the name or shadow of excellence, it is better to let them remain as they were; for it is better to have something to admire than nothing—names, if not things—the shadow, if not the substance—the tinsel, if not the gold. All can now read and write equally; and, it is therefore presumed, equally well. Any thing short of this sweeping conclusion is an invidious distinction; and those who claim it for themselves or others are *exclusionists* in letters. Every one at least can call names—can invent a falsehood, or repeat a story against those who have galled their pragmatical pretensions by really adding to the stock of general amusement or instruction. Every one in a crowd has the power to throw dirt: nine out of ten have the inclination. It is curious that, in an age when the most universally-admitted claim to public distinction is literary merit, the attaining this distinction is almost a sure title to public contempt and obloquy.[1] They cry you up, because you are unknown, and do not excite their jealousy; and run you down, when they have thus distinguished you, out of envy and spleen at the very idol they have set up. A public favourite is 'kept like an apple in the jaw of an ape—first mouthed, to be afterwards swallowed. When they need what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and spunge, you shall be dry again.' At first they think only of the pleasure or advantage they receive: but, on reflection, they are mortified at the superiority implied in this involuntary concession, and are determined to be even with you the very first opportunity. What is the prevailing spirit of modern literature? To defame men of letters. What are the publications that succeed? Those that pretend to teach the public that the persons they have been accustomed unwittingly to look up to as the lights of the earth are no better than themselves, or a set of vagabonds or miscreants that should be hunted out of society.[1] Hence men of letters, losing their self-respect, become government-tools, and prostitute their talents to the most infamous purposes, or turn *dandy scribblers*, and set up for gentlemen authors in their own defence. I like the Order of the Jesuits better than this: they made themselves respected by the laity, kept their own secret, and did not prey on one another. Resume then, oh! Learning, thy robe pontifical; clothe thyself in pride and purple; join the sacred to the profane; wield both worlds: instead of twopenny trash and mechanics' magazines, issue bulls and decretals; say not, let there be light, but darkness visible; draw a bandage over the eyes of the ignorant and unlettered; hang the terrors of superstition and despotism over them;—and for thy pains they will bless thee: children will pull off their caps as thou dost pass; women will courtesy; the old will wipe their beards; and thou wilt rule once more over the base serving people, clowns, and nobles, with a rod of iron!

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[1] Is not this partly owing to the disappointment of the public at finding any defect in their idol?

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[1] An old friend of mine, when he read the abuse and billingsgate poured out in certain Tory publications, used to congratulate himself upon it as a favourable sign of the times, and of the progressive improvement of our manners. Where we now called names, we formerly burnt each other at a stake; and all the malice of the heart flew to the tongue and vented itself in scolding, instead of crusades and *auto-da-fés*—the nobler revenge of our ancestors for a difference of opinion. An author now libels a prince; and, if he takes the law of him or throws him into gaol, it is looked upon as a harsh and ungentlemanly proceeding. He, therefore, gets a dirty Secretary to employ a dirty bookseller, to hire a set of dirty scribblers, to pelt him with dirt and cover him with blackguard epithets—till he is hardly in a condition to walk the streets. This is hard measure, no doubt, and base ingratitude on the part of the public, according to the imaginary dignity and natural precedence which authors take of kings; but the latter are men, and will have their revenge where they can get it. They have no longer their old summary appeal—their will may still be good—to the dungeon and the dagger. Those who 'speak evil of dignities' may, therefore, think themselves well off in being merely *sent to Coventry*; and, besides, if they have *pluck*, they can make a Parthian retreat, and shoot poisoned arrows behind them. The good people of Florence lift up their hands when they are shewn the caricatures in the Queen's Matrimonial-Ladder, and ask if they are really a likeness of the King?

ON DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE

The Monthly Magazine.] [*August*, 1827.

Those people who are uncomfortable in themselves are disagreeable tc others. I do not here mean to speak of persons who offend intentionally, or are obnoxious to dislike from some palpable defect ot mind or body, ugliness, pride, ill-humour, &c.,—but of those who are disagreeable in spite of themselves, and, as it might appear, with almost every qualification to recommend them to others. This want of success is owing chiefly to something in what is called their *manner* ; and this again has its foundation in a certain cross-grained and unsociable state of feeling on their part, which influences us, perhaps, without our distinctly adverting to it. The mind is a finer instrument than we sometimes suppose it, and is not only swayed by overt acts and tangible proofs, but has an instinctive feeling of the air of truth. We find many individuals in whose company we pass our time, and have no particular fault to find with their understandings or character, and yet we are never thoroughly satisfied with them : the reason will turn out to be, upon examination, that they are never thoroughly satisfied with themselves, but uneasy and out of sorts all the time ; and this makes us uneasy with them, without our reflecting on, or being able to discover the cause.

Thus, for instance, we meet with persons who do us a number of kindnesses, who shew us every mark of respect and good-will, who are friendly and serviceable,—and yet we do not feel grateful to them, after all. We reproach ourselves with this as caprice or insensibility, and try to get the better of it ; but there is something in their way of doing things that prevents us from feeling cordial or sincerely obliged to them. We think them very worthy people, and would be glad of an opportunity to do them a good turn if it were in our power ; but we cannot get beyond this : the utmost we can do is to save appearances, and not come to an open rupture with them. The truth is, in all such cases, we do not sympathise (as we ought) with them, because they do not sympathise (as they ought) with us. They have done what they did from a sense of duty in a cold dry manner, or from a meddlesome busybody humour ; or to shew their superiority over us, or to patronise our infirmity ; or they have dropped some hint by the way, or blundered upon some topic they should not, and have shewn, by one means or other, that they were occupied with any thing but the pleasure they were affording us, or a delicate attention to our feelings. Such persons may be styled *friendly grievances*. They are commonly people of low spirits and disappointed views, who see the discouraging side of human life, and, with the best intentions in the world, contrive to make every thing they have to do with uncomfortable. They are alive to your distress, and take pains to remove it; but they have no satisfaction in the gaiety and ease they have communicated, and are on the *look-out* for some new occasion of signalizing their zeal; nor are they backward to insinuate that you will soon have need of their assistance, to guard you against running into fresh difficulties, or to extricate you from them. From large benevolence of soul and 'discourse of reason, looking before and after,' they are continually reminding you of something that has gone wrong in time past, or that may do so in that which is to come, and are surprised that their awkward hints, sly inuendos, blunt questions, and solemn features do not excite all the complacency and mutual good understanding in you which it is intended that they should. When they make themselves miserable on your account, it is hard that you will not lend them your countenance and support. This deplorable humour of theirs does not hit any one else. They are useful, but not agreeable people; they may assist you in your affairs, but they depress and tyrannise over your feelings. When they have made you happy, they will not let you be so—have no enjoyment of the good they have done—will on no account part with their melancholy and desponding tone—and, by their mawkish insensibility and doleful grimaces, throw a damp over the triumph they are called upon to celebrate. They would keep you in hot water, that they may help you out of it. They will nurse you in a fit of sickness (congenial sufferers!)—arbitrate a law-suit for you, and embroil you deeper—procure you a loan of money;—but all the while they are only delighted with rubbing the sore place, and casting the colour of your mental or other disorders. 'The whole need not a physician;' and, being once placed at ease and comfort, they have no farther use for you as subjects for their singular beneficence, and you are not sorry to be quit of their tiresome interference. The old proverb, *A friend in need is a friend indeed*, is not verified in them. The class of persons here spoken of are the very reverse of *summer-friends*, who court you in prosperity, flatter your vanity, are the humble servants of your follies, never see or allude to any thing wrong, minister to your gaiety, smooth over every difficulty, and, with the slightest approach of misfortune or of any thing unpleasant, take French leave:—

'As when, in prime of June, a burnished fly,
Sprung from the meads, o'er which he sweeps along,
Cheered by the breathing bloom and vital sky,
Tunes up amid these airy halls his song,
Soothing at first the gay reposing throng;

And oft he sips their bowl, or nearly drowned,
He thence recovering drives their beds among,
And scares their tender sleep with trump profound;
Then out again he flies to wing his mazy round.'

THOMSON'S CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.

However we may despise such triflers, yet we regret them more than those well-meaning friends on whom a dull melancholy vapour hangs, that drags them and every one about them to the ground.

Again, there are those who might be very agreeable people, if they had but spirit to be so; but there is a narrow, unaspiring, under-bred tone in all they say or do. They have great sense and information—abound in a knowledge of character—have a fund of anecdote—are unexceptionable in manners and appearance—and yet we cannot make up our minds to like them: we are not glad to see them, nor sorry when they go away. Our familiarity with them, however great, wants the principle of cement, which is a certain appearance of frank cordiality and social enjoyment. They have no pleasure in the subjects of their own thoughts, and therefore can communicate none to others. There is a dry, husky, grating manner—a pettiness of detail—a tenaciousness of particulars, however trifling or unpleasant—a disposition to cavil—an aversion to enlarged and liberal views of things—in short, a hard, painful, unbending *matter-of-factness*, from which the spirit and effect are banished, and the letter only is attended to, which makes it impossible to sympathise with their discourse. To make conversation interesting or agreeable, there is required either the habitual tone of good company, which gives a favourable colouring to every thing—or the warmth and enthusiasm of genius, which, though it may occasionally offend or be thrown off its guard, makes amends by its rapturous flights, and flings a glancing light upon all things. The literal and *dogged* style of conversation resembles that of a French picture, or its mechanical fidelity is like evidence given in a court of justice, or a police report.

From the literal to the plain-spoken, the transition is easy. The most efficient weapon of offence is truth. Those who deal in dry and repulsive matters-of-fact, tire out their friends; those who blurt out hard and home truths, make themselves mortal enemies wherever they come. There are your blunt, honest creatures, who omit no opportunity of letting you know their minds, and are sure to tell you all the ill, and conceal all the good they hear of you. They would not flatter you for the world, and to caution you against the malice of others, they think the province of a friend. This is not candour, but impudence; and yet they think it odd you are not charmed with their unreserved communicativeness of disposition. Gossips and tale-bearers, on the contrary, who supply the *tittle-tattle* of the neighbourhood, flatter you to your face, and laugh at you behind your back, are welcome and agreeable guests in all companies. Though you know it will be your turn next, yet for the sake of the immediate gratification, you are contented to pay your share of the public tax upon character, and are better pleased with the falsehoods that never reach your ears, than with the truths that others (less complaisant and more sincere) utter to your face—so short-sighted and willing to be imposed upon is our self-love! There is a man, who has the air of not being convinced without an argument: you avoid him as if he were a lion in your path. There is another, who asks you fifty questions as to the commonest things you advance: you would sooner pardon a fellow who held a pistol to your breast and demanded your money. No one regards a turnpike-keeper, or a custom-house officer, with a friendly eye: he who stops you in an excursion of fancy, or ransacks the articles of your belief obstinately and churlishly, to distinguish the spurious from the genuine, is still more your foe. These inquisitors and cross-examiners upon system make ten enemies for every controversy in which they engage. The world dread nothing so much as being convinced of their errors. In doing them this piece of service, you make war equally on their prejudices, their interests, their pride, and indolence. You not only set up for a superiority of understanding over them, which they hate, but you deprive them of their ordinary grounds of action, their topics of discourse, of their confidence in themselves, and those to whom they have been accustomed to look up for instruction and advice. It is making children of them. You unhinge all their established opinions and trains of thought; and after leaving them in this listless, vacant, unsettled state—dissatisfied with their own notions and shocked at yours—you expect them to court and be delighted with your company, because, forsooth, you have only expressed your sincere and conscientious convictions. Mankind are not deceived by professions, unless they choose. They think that this pill of true doctrine, however it may be gilded over, is full of gall and bitterness to them; and, again, it is a maxim of which the vulgar are firmly persuaded, that plain-speaking (as it is called) is, nine parts in ten, spleen and self-opinion; and the other part, perhaps, honesty. Those who will not abate an inch in argument, and are always seeking to recover the wind of you, are, in the eye of the world, disagreeable, unconscionable people, who ought to be *sent to Coventry*, or left to wrangle by themselves. No persons, however, are more averse to contradiction than these same dogmatists. What shews our susceptibility on this point is, there is no flattery so adroit or effectual as that of implicit assent. Any one, however mean his capacity or ill-qualified to judge who gives way to all our sentiments, and never seems to think but as we do, is indeed an *alter idem*—another self; and we admit him without scruple into our entire confidence, 'yea, into our heart of hearts.'

It is the same in books. Those which, under the disguise of plain-speaking, vent paradoxes, and set their faces against the common-sense of mankind, are neither 'the volumes

——'That enrich the shops,
That pass with approbation through the land;'

nor, I fear, can it be added—

'That bring their authors an immortal fame.'

They excite a clamour and opposition at first, and are in general soon consigned to oblivion. Even if the opinions are in the end adopted, the authors gain little by it, and their names remain in their original obloquy; for the public will own no obligations to such ungracious benefactors. In like manner, there are many books written in a very delightful vein, though with little in them, and that are accordingly popular. Their principle is to please, and not to offend; and they succeed in both objects. We are contented with the deference shown to our feelings for the time, and grant a truce both to wit and wisdom. The 'courteous reader' and the good-natured author are well matched in this instance, and find their account in mutual tenderness and forbearance to each other's infirmities. I am not sure that Walton's Angler is not a book of this last description—

'That dallies with the innocence of thought,
Like the old age.'

Hobbes and Mandeville are in the opposite extreme, and have met with a correspondent fate. The Tatler and the Spectator are in the golden mean, carry instruction as far as it can go without shocking, and give the most exquisite pleasure without one particle of pain. '*Desire to please, and you will infallibly please*,' is a maxim equally applicable to the study or the drawing-room. Thus also we see actors of very small pretensions, and who have scarce any other merit than that of being on good terms with themselves, and in high good humour with their parts (though they hardly understand a word of them), who are universal favourites with the audience. Others, who are masters of their art, and in whom no slip or flaw can be detected, you have no pleasure in seeing, from something dry, repulsive, and unconciliating in their manner; and you almost hate the very mention of their names, as an unavailing appeal to your candid decision in their favour, and as taxing you with injustice for refusing it.

We may observe persons who seem to take a peculiar delight in the *disagreeable.* They catch all sorts of uncouth tones and gestures, the manners and dialect of clowns and hoydens, and aim at vulgarity as desperately as others ape gentility. [This is what is often understood by a *love of low life.*] They say the most unwarrantable things, without meaning or feeling what they say. What startles or shocks other people, is to them a sport—an amusing excitement—a fillip to their constitutions; and from the bluntness of their perceptions, and a certain wilfulness of spirit, not being able to enter into the refined and agreeable, they make a merit of despising every thing of the kind. Masculine women, for example, are those who, not being distinguished by the charms and delicacy of the sex, affect a superiority over it by throwing aside all decorum. We also find another class, who continually do and say what they ought not, and what they do not intend, and who are governed almost entirely by an instinct of absurdity. Owing to a perversity of imagination or irritability of nerve, the idea that a thing is improper acts as a provocation to it: the fear of committing a blunder is so strong, that in their agitation they *bolt* out whatever is uppermost in their minds, before they are aware of the consequence. The dread of something wrong haunts and rivets their attention to it; and an uneasy, morbid apprehensiveness of temper takes away their self-possession, and hurries them into the very mistakes they are most anxious to avoid.

If we look about us, and ask who are the agreeable and disagreeable people in the world, we shall see that it does not depend on their virtues or vices—their understanding or stupidity—but as much on the degree of pleasure or pain they seem to feel in ordinary social intercourse. What signify all the good qualities any one possesses, if he is none the better for them himself? If the cause is so delightful, the effect ought to be so too. We enjoy a friend's society only in proportion as he is satisfied with ours. Even wit, however it may startle, is only agreeable as it is sheathed in good-humour. There are a kind of *intellectual stammerers*, who are delivered of their good things with pain and effort; and consequently what costs them such evident uneasiness does not impart unmixed delight to the bystanders. There are those, on the contrary, whose sallies cost them nothing—who abound in a flow of pleasantry and good-humour; and who float down the stream with them carelessly and triumphantly,—

'Wit at the helm, and Pleasure at the prow.'

Perhaps it may be said of English wit in general, that it too much resembles pointed lead: after all, there is something heavy and dull in it! The race of small wits are not the least agreeable people in the world. They have their little joke to themselves, enjoy it, and do not set up any preposterous pretensions to thwart the current of our self-love. Toad-eating is accounted a thriving profession; and a *butt*, according to the Spectator, is a highly useful member of society—as one who takes whatever is said of him in good part, and as necessary to conduct off the spleen and superfluous petulance of the company. Opposed to these are the swaggering bullies—the licensed wits—the free-thinkers—the loud talkers, who, in the jockey phrase, have *lost their mouths*, and cannot be reined in by any regard to decency or common-sense. The more obnoxious the subject, the more are they charmed with it, converting their want of feeling into a proof of superiority to vulgar prejudice and squeamish affectation. But there is an unseemly exposure of the mind, as well as of the body. There are some objects that shock the sense, and cannot with propriety be mentioned: there are naked truths that offend the mind, and ought to be kept out of sight as much as possible. For human nature cannot bear to be too hardly pressed upon. One of these cynical truisms, when brought forward to the world, may be forgiven as a slip of the pen: a succession of them, denoting a deliberate purpose and *malice prepense*, must ruin any writer. Lord Byron had got into an irregular course of these a little before his death—seemed desirous, in imitation of Mr. Shelley, to run the gauntlet of public obloquy—and, at the same time, wishing to screen himself from the censure he defied, dedicated his Cain to Sir Walter Scott—a pretty godfather to such a bantling!

Some persons are of so teazing and fidgetty a turn of mind, that they do not give you a moment's rest. Every thing goes wrong with them. They complain of a headache or the weather. They take up a book, and lay it down again—venture an opinion, and retract it before they have half done—offer to serve you, and prevent some one else from doing it. If you dine with them at a tavern, in order to be more at your ease, the fish is too little done—the sauce is not the right one; they ask for a sort of wine which they think is not to be had, or if it is, after some trouble, procured, do not touch it; they give the waiter fifty contradictory orders, and are restless and sit on thorns the whole of dinner-time. All this is owing to a want of robust health, and of a strong spirit of enjoyment; it is a fastidious habit of mind, produced by a valetudinary habit of body: they are out of sorts with every thing, and of course their ill-humour and captiousness communicates itself to you, who are as little delighted with them as they are with other things. Another sort of people, equally objectionable with this helpless class, who are disconcerted by a shower of rain or stopped by an insect's wing, are those who, in the opposite spirit, will have every thing their own way, and carry all before them—who cannot brook the slightest shadow of opposition—who are always in the heat of an argument—who knit their brows and clench their teeth in some speculative discussion, as if they were engaged in a personal quarrel—and who, though successful over almost every competitor, seem still to resent the very offer of resistance to their supposed authority, and are as angry as if they had sustained some premeditated injury. There is an impatience of temper and an intolerance of opinion in this that conciliates neither our affection nor esteem. To such persons nothing appears of any moment but the indulgence of a domineering intellectual superiority to the disregard and discomfiture of their own and every body else's comfort. Mounted on an abstract proposition, they trample on every courtesey and decency of behaviour; and though, perhaps, they do not intend the gross personalities they are guilty of, yet they cannot be acquitted of a want of due consideration for others, and of an intolerable egotism in the support of truth and justice. You may hear one of these Quixotic declaimers pleading the cause of humanity in a voice of thunder, or expatiating on the beauty of a Guido with features distorted with rage and scorn. This is not a very amiable or edifying spectacle.

There are persons who cannot make friends. Who are they? Those who cannot be friends. It is not the want of understanding or good-nature, of entertaining or useful qualities, that you complain of: on the contrary, they have probably many points of attraction; but they have one that neutralises all these—they care nothing about you, and are neither the better nor worse for what you think of them. They manifest no joy at your approach; and when you leave them, it is with a feeling that they can do just as well without you. This is not sullenness, nor indifference, nor absence of mind; but they are intent solely on their own thoughts, and you are merely one of the subjects they exercise them upon. They live in society as in a solitude; and, however their brain works, their pulse beats neither faster nor slower for the common accidents of life. There is, therefore, something cold and repulsive in the air that is about them—like that of marble. In a word, they are *modern philosophers*; and the modern philosopher is what the pedant was of old—a being who lives in a world of his own, and has no correspondence with this. It is not that such persons have not done you services—you acknowledge it; it is not that they have said severe things of you—you submit to it as a necessary evil: but it is the cool manner in which the whole is done that annoys you—the speculating upon you, as if you were nobody—the regarding you, with a view to experiment *in corpore vili*—the principle of dissection—the determination to spare no blemishes—to cut you down to your real standard;—in short, the utter absence of the partiality of friendship, the blind enthusiasm of affection, or the delicacy of common decency, that whether they 'hew you as a carcase fit for hounds, or carve you as a dish fit for the gods,' the operation on your feelings and your sense of obligation is just the same; and, whether they are demons or angels in themselves, you wish them equally *at the devil*!

Other persons of worth and sense give way to mere violence of temperament (with which the understanding has nothing to do)—are burnt up with a perpetual fury—repel and throw you to a distance by their restless, whirling motion—so that you dare not go near them, or feel as uneasy in their company as if you stood on the edge of a volcano. They have their *tempora mollia fandi*; but then what a stir may you not expect the next moment! Nothing is less inviting or less comfortable than this state of uncertainty and apprehension. Then there are those who never approach you without the most alarming advice or information, telling you that you are in a dying way, or that your affairs are on the point of ruin, by way of disburthening their consciences; and others, who give you to understand much the same thing as a good joke, out of sheer impertinence, constitutional vivacity, and want of something to say. All these, it must be confessed, are disagreeable people; and you repay their over-anxiety or total forgetfulness of you, by a determination to cut them as speedily as possible. We meet with instances of persons who overpower you by a sort of boisterous mirth and rude animal spirits, with whose ordinary state of excitement it is as impossible to keep up as with that of any one really intoxicated; and with others who seem scarce alive—who take no pleasure or interest in any thing—who are born to exemplify the maxim,

> 'Not to admire is all the art I know
> To make men happy, or to keep them so,'—

and whose mawkish insensibility or sullen scorn are equally annoying. In general, all people brought up in remote country places, where life is crude and harsh—all sectaries—all partisans of a losing cause, are discontented and disagreeable. Commend me above all to the Westminster School of Reform, whose blood runs as cold in their veins as the torpedo's, and whose touch jars like it. Catholics are, upon the whole, more amiable than Protestants—foreigners than English people. Among ourselves, the Scotch, as a nation, are particularly disagreeable. They hate every appearance of comfort themselves, and refuse it to others. Their climate, their religion, and their habits are equally averse to pleasure. Their manners are either distinguished by a fawning sycophancy (to gain their own ends, and conceal their natural defects), that makes one sick; or by a morose unbending callousness, that makes one shudder. I had forgot to mention two other descriptions of persons who fall under the scope of this essay:—those who take up a subject, and run on with it interminably, without knowing whether their hearers care one word about it, or in the least minding what reception their oratory meets with—these are pretty generally voted *bores* (mostly German ones);—and others, who may be designated as practical paradox-mongers—who discard the 'milk of human kindness,' and an attention to common observances, from all their actions, as effeminate and puling—who wear a white hat as a mark of superior understanding, and carry home a handkerchief-full of mushrooms in the top of it as an original discovery—who give you craw-fish for supper instead of lobsters; seek their company in a garret, and over a gin-bottle, to avoid the imputation of affecting genteel society; and discard them after a term of years, and warn others against them, as being *honest fellows*, which is thought a vulgar prejudice. This is carrying the harsh and repulsive even beyond the disagreeable—to the hateful. Such persons are generally people of common-place understandings, obtuse feelings, and inordinate vanity. They are formidable if they get you in their power—otherwise, they are only to be laughed at.

There are a vast number who are disagreeable from meanness of spirit, from downright insolence, from slovenliness of dress or disgusting tricks, from folly or ignorance: but these causes are positive moral or physical defects, and I only meant to speak of that repulsiveness of manners which arises from want of tact and sympathy with others. So far of friendship: a word, if I durst, of love. Gallantry to women (the sure road to their favour) is nothing but the appearance of extreme devotion to all their wants and wishes—a delight in their satisfaction, and a confidence in yourself, as being able to contribute towards it. The slightest indifference with regard to them, or distrust of yourself, are equally fatal. The amiable is the voluptuous in looks, manner, or words. No face that exhibits this kind of expression—whether lively or serious, obvious or suppressed, will be thought ugly—no address, awkward—no lover who approaches every woman he meets as his mistress, will be unsuccessful. Diffidence and awkwardness are the two antidotes to love.

To please universally, we must be pleased with ourselves and others. There should be a tinge of the coxcomb, an oil of self-complacency, an anticipation of success—there should be no gloom, no moroseness no shyness—in short, there should be very little of an Englishman, and a good deal of a Frenchman. But though, I believe, this is the receipt, we are none the nearer making use of it. It is impossible for those who are naturally disagreeable ever to become otherwise. This is some consolation, as it may save a world of useless pains and anxiety. '*Desire to please, and you will infallibly please,*' is a true maxim; but it does not follow that it is in the power of all to practise it. A vain man, who thinks he is endeavouring to please, is only endeavouring to shine, and is still farther from the mark. An irritable man, who puts a check upon himself, only grows dull, and loses spirit to be any thing. Good temper and a happy spirit (which are the indispensable requisites) can no more be commanded than good health or good looks; and though the plain and sickly need not distort their features, and may abstain from success, this is all they can do. The utmost a disagreeable person can do is to hope to be less disagreeable than with care and study he might become, and to pass unnoticed in society. With this negative character he should be contented, and may build his fame and happiness on other things.

I will conclude with a character of men who neither please nor aspire to please anybody, and who can come in nowhere so properly as at the fag-end of an essay:—I mean that class of discontented but amusing persons, who are infatuated with their own ill success, and reduced to despair by a lucky turn in their favour. While all goes well, they are *like fish out of water.* They have no reliance on or sympathy with their good fortune, and look upon it as a momentary delusion. Let a doubt be thrown on the question, and they begin to be full of lively apprehensions again: let all their hopes vanish, and they feel themselves on firm ground once more. From want of spirit or of habit, their imaginations cannot rise above the low ground of humility—cannot reflect the gay, flaunting tints of the fancy—flag and droop into despondency—and can neither indulge the expectation, nor employ the means of success. Even when it is within their reach, they dare not lay hands upon it; and shrink from unlooked-for bursts of prosperity, as something of which they are both ashamed and unworthy. The class of *croakers* here spoken of are less delighted at other people's misfortunes than their own. Their neighbours may have some pretensions—they have none. Querulous complaints and anticipations of discomfort are the food on which they live; and they at last acquire a passion for that which is the favourite theme of their thoughts, and can no more do without it than without the pinch of snuff with which they season their conversation, and enliven the pauses of their daily prognostics.

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